

Cambridge Latin American Studies

# BETWEEN REVOLUTION AND THE BALLOT BOX

The Origins of the Argentine  
Radical Party



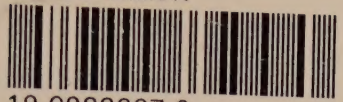
Paula Alonso

This is a comprehensive study of the formative years of the Argentine Radical Party in the 1890s. Through its analysis of the party the book also sheds light on the dynamics of Argentine politics at the end of the nineteenth century.

Founded in 1891, the Unión Cívica Radical, generally known as the Radical Party, is the oldest national political party in Argentina and one of the two parties that dominated the country's politics during the twentieth century. As a central component of Argentina's political history, the Radical Party has received much attention from historians. However, most accounts have concentrated on the period after 1916, when the party won its first presidential election; the formative years of the party have generally been ignored. Yet as the strongest opposition party during the 1890s, a pivotal decade in the birth of Argentina's party system, the Radical Party effected a critical development in Argentine politics, defining a system of open confrontation and political competition.

This study offers not merely a revised version of the party's story but also a new perspective on the nature of the Radical Party and of the politics of the period as a whole.

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Radical Party in the 1890s



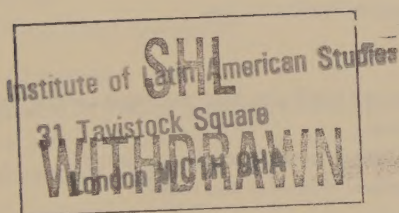


# Between Revolution and the Ballot Box

The Origins of the Argentine Radical Party  
in the 1890s

PAULA ALONSO

*Universidad de San Andrés, Buenos Aires*



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Universidad de San Andrés  
Buenos Aires, August 1999

## List of Abbreviations

<i>BOLSA</i>	Bank of London in South America
<i>CFB</i>	Council of Foreign Bondholders
<i>DSCD</i>	<i>Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados</i>
<i>DSCDBA</i>	<i>Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la Provincia de Buenos Aires</i>
<i>DSCS</i>	<i>Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Senadores</i>
<i>FO</i>	Foreign Office
<i>MyD</i>	<i>Leandro N. Alem: Mensaje y destino</i> , Buenos Aires, Ed. Raigal, 1956, 8 vols.
<i>PAN</i>	<i>Partido Autonomista Nacional</i>
<i>PRO</i>	Public Record Office, London
<i>UC</i>	<i>Unión Cívica</i>
<i>UCJ</i>	<i>Unión Cívica de la Juventud</i>
<i>UCN</i>	<i>Unión Cívica Nacional</i>
<i>UCR</i>	<i>Unión Cívica Radical</i>

*Note:* When making reference to English newspapers, and only when considered relevant, the date of the article has been placed in brackets following the date of publication.





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## Introduction

The Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), usually known as the Radical Party, is the oldest national political party in Argentina and one of two parties that have dominated Argentine politics during the twentieth century. Founded in 1891 to confront the Partido Autonomista Nacional (PAN), a coalition that had controlled Argentine politics since 1880, the UCR won its first presidential election in 1916, ending thirty-six years of continuous PAN political predominance. During its early years the Radical Party was led by Leandro Alem and fought the PAN with all methods available – words, votes, and guns – becoming the country's most destabilizing opposition force. After Alem's death in 1896, the party entered into rapid decline and by the turn of the century had disbanded. Hipólito Yrigoyen, Alem's nephew, began the reconstruction of the party in 1903, building on the ruins of the old political organization and winning the presidency in 1916.

This book focuses on the origins and development of the Radical Party at the end of the nineteenth century, from the party's foundation in 1891 until its decline at the end of the decade. Little is known about the formative years of the Radical Party. Traditionally, historians have divided turn-of-the-century Argentina into two periods: 1880 to 1916, when the country was under the restrictively democratic PAN regime; and 1916–1930, when the Radical Party came to power, inaugurating a democratic period under universal suffrage with secret and compulsory voting – an era put to an end by the first military coup the country experienced in the twentieth century. As a central component of the country's political history, the UCR has received much attention from historians.<sup>1</sup> However, most accounts have concentrated on the period after 1916, and the earlier, formative years of the Radical Party have received only a few brief and introductory remarks. Not only has this precluded any clear understanding of the origins of the party, but it has

1 A listing of most works on the party's history runs to more than 800 titles. C. Giacabone and E. Gallo, *Manual bibliográfico sobre la Unión Cívica Radical*, Buenos Aires, 1989.

also tended anachronistically to join together the development and nature of the UCR in the 1890s with those of the party in the second decade of the twentieth century as if there were no significant distinctions between the two.

In fact, there was little continuity between these two periods of the party's history. Certain features of the original UCR survived well into the twentieth century: the party's moralistic rhetoric, its form of internal organization, and its persistent refusal to coalesce with other political forces. However, the Radical Party was originally founded by a group of men with common purposes, who gave the party a specific identity and employed a distinctive political discourse. Their agreed party strategy comprised constant criticism of the government, electoral competition, revolutionary uprisings, and congressional opposition. Most of these features had disappeared by the time Yrigoyen took over the leadership of the UCR.<sup>2</sup> By then the founding leaders had, for the most part, died, abandoned the party for other political forces, or retired from political life altogether. When he began the reconstruction of the UCR, Yrigoyen sought to ensure a sense of continuity through the use of old party symbols. But most of the national figures of the old guard refused to join him. Yrigoyen's leadership conferred a new and distinctive identity on the party; his elusive and discreet character contrasted sharply with the confrontational personality of Alem. There were important differences in party strategy too: Whereas under Alem's leadership the Radical Party had regularly competed in elections in the federal capital and the Province of Buenos Aires, the party's two main strongholds, the tactic of abstaining from elections in protest at unfair electoral conditions became Yrigoyen's main party banner. Under Yrigoyen's leadership the UCR abstained from contesting elections until secret and compulsory voting was introduced in 1912. The political contexts of the original and later Radical parties were also very different. In the twentieth century, Argentine politics became more fragmented. The first decade of the century saw a return to the high rates of economic growth and immigration that Argentina had experienced before the economic crisis of 1890, and this socio-economic transformation increasingly influenced the country's political life. Economic and social interests founded organizations to represent themselves or used more consistently the ones already created in the late nineteenth century. Socio-economic factors became more relevant

2 It could be argued that Yrigoyen also continued with the original UCR's revolutionary banner as he inaugurated the reorganization of the party with the launching of a revolution in 1905. It has generally been agreed, however, that Yrigoyen was not a great enthusiast for uprisings and that he organized the revolution of 1905 with the sole intention of using it as propaganda for the reorganization of the party and to attract the Radical old guard.

to the voting preferences of the electorate and the composition of political parties. The sons of immigrants began to participate in politics and their support represented a significant component of the twentieth-century UCR.<sup>3</sup>

The focus of this study on the formative years of the UCR not only can help us to highlight the contrast with and similarities to the party in subsequent years; more significant, it can provide us with a better understanding of the nature of the party at the time of its foundation and of the political dynamics of late nineteenth-century Argentina as a whole. The 1890s was a central period for the birth of Argentina's party system. The decade witnessed not only the organization of the UCR but also of the Socialist Party, two organizations that opposed the PAN and also survived it. As the strongest opposition party in the 1890s, the UCR had profound and long-lasting effects in shaping Argentina's political culture and defining its party system.<sup>4</sup> The Radical Party had a number of characteristics, including a vociferous rhetoric, the outspoken defense of the use of violence, a perception of the political realm as inhabited by a corrupt government that contrasted with their own moral purity, and a refusal to collaborate with the PAN or any other political party. These characteristics polarized politics in the 1890s, creating a irreconcilable confrontation between government and opposition. The creation of the UCR produced a party development in turn-of-the-century Argentina very different from that for which the leading members of the PAN had hoped. Instead of one-party domination where politics was reduced to competition between factions, or a gradual formation of a party system deriving from the alternation in power of conservative political forces, the formation of the Radical Party produced in the 1890s a system of political contestation, competition, and confrontation. In turn, this had long-lasting effects. The party was establishing the basis for a long tradition in Argentina in which any cooperation or conciliation between the UCR and other political forces or between government and opposition became virtually impossible, or at least highly difficult. The Radicals' belief that they could never

3 Ezequiel Gallo and Silvia Sigal, "La formación de los partidos políticos contemporáneos: La Unión Cívica Radical (1890-1916)," *Desarrollo Económico*, April-September, 1963, Vol. 3, N. 1-2, pp. 212-222; Richard Walter, "Elections in the City of Buenos Aires during the First Yrigoyen Administration: Social Class and Political Preference," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, N. 58 (4), 1978, pp. 595-624.

4 The term political culture is used here as defined by K.M. Baker, in the "Introduction" to *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, Oxford and New York, 1987, pp. xi-xiii. Political culture refers to the set of discourses and practices that characterizes politics, understood as the activity through which individuals and groups in any society articulate, negotiate, implement, and enforce the competing claims they make on one another.



reconcile their principles with those of any other party set the scene for a durable political culture in Argentina of exclusive (one-party) government.<sup>5</sup>

The standard interpretation of the 1880–1916 period has portrayed politics as being closely controlled by a tight oligarchy lead by the PAN. The PAN came into power in 1880, reinforced the state-building process that had begun with the Constitution of 1853, and embarked the country on a remarkable economic and social transformation at the turn of the century, converting Argentina into a leading world exporter of meat and grains. Progressive in their economics, the leaders of the PAN have been described as highly conservative politically. Consolidating a restrictive democratic system, the PAN kept the reins of power in their hands, impeding the rise of opposition parties through the manipulation of elections and controlling the succession of all presidents and most elected posts of the 1880–1916 period. The standard view also emphasizes that when in the 1880s the leaders of the PAN began the modernization process, they sowed the seeds of their own destruction. The social effect of the modernization process was the emergence of new social forces, but the landed oligarchy that composed the PAN refused to share power with them. However, the pressure to open up the political system forced them to enact the electoral reform legislation in 1912. To an already existing male universal suffrage was added secret and compulsory voting, thus including all Argentine males into the political system and making the electoral process more transparent.<sup>6</sup>

In this prevalent view of Argentina's politics, the Radical Party is portrayed as representative of the newly emerged social forces, the political face of the modernization process.<sup>7</sup> Although some of its leaders belonged to the elite, the party is said to have represented the middle classes, a segment estimated to have grown rapidly between the two national census of 1865 and 1895, a group ready and anxious to exercise some influence on the politics of the country. The Radical Party then channeled the political demands of this new class, fighting for electoral reform to put an end to the antiquated political system and to begin a new era of modern representative democracy.

This standard interpretation of Argentine history and of the founding

5 See Ezequiel Gallo, "Traditions and political styles in Argentina," *The St. Michael's Meeting*, Maryland 1979, p. 28.

6 This standard interpretation has been formulated in the now classic G. Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición: De la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas*, Buenos Aires, 1965, and J.L. Romero, *Historia de la ideas políticas en Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1946. Most works have followed this prevalent view.

7 See, for example, Gallo, "La formación"; D. Rock, *Politics in Argentina 1890–1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism*, Cambridge, 1975.

of the Radical Party has received few challenges.<sup>8</sup> Most of the concerns of historians have related to how best to label the social groups that the UCR was supposed to represent. The list of the different social groups thought to have been the core of the new party is a long one: It includes the *petite bourgeoisie*;<sup>9</sup> the middle class;<sup>10</sup> the lower classes or popular sectors;<sup>11</sup> a combination of the last two groups;<sup>12</sup> the creoles, the immigrant masses, and the popular sectors;<sup>13</sup> the city merchants and the young;<sup>14</sup> the elite;<sup>15</sup> a faction of the elite allied with middle-class

8 There has not been a complete review of the whole 1880–1916. A good introduction to this period can be found in Ezequiel Gallo, "Argentina: Society and Politics, 1880–1916," in L. Bethell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. V, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 359–392. One of the finest works on the institutional dynamics of the period still remains N. Botana, *El orden conservador: La política argentina entre 1880–1916*, Buenos Aires, 1977; for the best analysis on the political and economic thought of the 1880–1910 years, see the preliminary study of N. Botana and E. Gallo, *De la República posible a la República verdadera (1880–1910)*, Buenos Aires, 1997, pp. 13–123. For a critical view of works such as Cantón, Gallo and Sigal, Smith, and Remmer that analyze the social basis of the representatives in Congress, see E. Zimmermann, *Los liberales reformistas: La cuestión social en la Argentina, 1890–1916*, Buenos Aires, 1995, pp. 29–35. Cantón, *El Parlamento Argentino en épocas de cambio, 1890, 1916 y 1946*, Buenos Aires, 1966; Gallo "La formación"; P. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy: Conflict among Political Elites, 1904–1955*, Madison, 1974; K. Remmer, *Party Competition in Argentina and Chile: Recruitment and Public Policy, 1890–1930*, Lincoln, 1984. In recent years there has been an increasing number of articles that have challenged some aspects of the standard interpretations of the 1880–1916 period on topics like elections and political participation of both Argentines and immigrants. For a review of these works, see P. Alonso, "La nueva historia política de la argentina del ochenta al centenario," *Anuario ibes*, N. 13, 1998, pp. 393–419.

9 L. Sommi, *La Revolución del 90*, Buenos Aires, 1957, p. 336.

10 F. Luna, "UCR. Historia de su pensamiento. El Radicalismo de ayer y de hoy," *Todo es Historia*, N. 289, July 1991, pp. 8–10; P. Snow, *Argentine Radicalism*, Iowa, 1965, p. 14, and also his "The Radical Parties of Chile and Argentina," Ph.D., diss., University of Virginia, 1963, p. 263; T.F. McGann, *Argentina, the United States and the Inter-American System, 1880–1914*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957, p. 53, and his *Argentina: The Divided Land*, New Jersey, 1966, p. 33; J.J. Johnson, *Political Change in Latin America*, Stanford, 1958, p. 98; a similar interpretation, although using indicators of modernization, can be found in Gallo and Sigal, "La formación," pp. 173–230.

11 A. Díaz de Molina, *La oligarquía argentina: Su filiación y su régimen (1848–1898)*, Buenos Aires, 1972, pp. 347–668; J.F. Sívori, *Fundación de la Unión Cívica Radical*, Buenos Aires, 1959, pp. 13–16; H.H. Gómez, *Significación histórica del radicalismo*, Buenos Aires, 1946, p. 8; H. Guido, *Secuelas del unicato. 1890–1896*, Buenos Aires, no date, p. 95.

12 L.A. Romero, "El Surgimiento y la llegada al poder," in L.A. Romero et al., *El Radicalismo*, Buenos Aires, 1969, pp. 16–17.

13 J.L. Romero, *Historia de las ideas políticas en Argentina*, Buenos Aires (new edition), 1975, pp. 210–216.

14 D.W. Richmond, *Carlos Pellegrini and the Crisis of the Argentine Elites, 1880–1916*, New York, 1989, p. 40.

15 L. Allub, *Orígenes del autoritarismo en América Latina*, Buenos Aires, 1983, p. 106. For J.A. Ramos, the 1890s was Buenos Aires's oligarchic counter-revolution against the national forces of the PAN; see his *Revolución y contrarevolución en Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1965, Vol. 1, pp. 309–399; and his *Del patriciado a la oligarquía. 1862–1904*, Buenos Aires, 1982, pp. 134–282.

sectors;<sup>16</sup> and all social groups previously excluded from the political scene.<sup>17</sup> Basically, while some historians have placed more emphasis on the coalition of middle-class sectors with a section of the elite, others have opted to stress the lower classes and popular sectors as the main components of the party's support. Some historians on the left, on the other hand, have accused the UCR of being a party comprised of the elite, indifferent toward the unprivileged and lower classes.<sup>18</sup>

Another set of historians' concerns has been related to the content and definition of the main political principles espoused by the Radical Party. The standard view has portrayed the UCR as a party that morally rejected the existing political system and fought for modern notions of representative democracy against a PAN which was hostile to this goal. Having remained silent on economic matters, the party has been identified as the agent of modernization of political practices in Argentina.<sup>19</sup> It has also been argued that there were no sharp ideological distinctions between the UCR and the PAN. The Radicals' limited goals were consistent with the standard Argentine liberal creed and the UCR was not interested in fundamental institutional, political, and/or social changes.<sup>20</sup> Only a few works have deviated from this trend and attempted to portray the UCR as a party aiming to produce a social revolution in Argentina<sup>21</sup> or as a nationalist party, the representative of the "American tradition" – "the indigenous roots" hostile to a "Europeanized oligarchy."<sup>22</sup>

16 Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, p. 32; Gallo, "La formación."

17 D. Cantón, *El parlamento argentino en épocas de cambio: 1890, 1916 y 1946*, Buenos Aires, 1966, p. 19; R. Botnick, *Yrigoyen y el primer movimiento*, Buenos Aires, 1989, pp. 19–28; W. Peralta and A. Blanco, *La Unión Cívica Radical, 1890–1916*, Buenos Aires, 1917, p. 19.

18 See, for example, Allub, *Orígenes del autoritarismo*, 106; R. Puiggrós, *Historia crítica de los partidos políticos*, Buenos Aires, 1956, pp. 90–102; Abelardo Ramos, *Revolución y contrarevolución en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1965, Vol. I, p. 378, and *Del patriciado a la oligarquía, 1862–1904*, Buenos Aires, 1982, pp. 134–204.

19 See, for example, Rock, *Politics in Argentina*; Gallo, "La formación"; Sommi, *La Revolución*, p. 160; Díaz de Molina, *La oligarquía argentina*, pp. 347–668; Guido, *Secuelas*, p. 95; Romero, *Historia de las ideas*, pp. 181–226; Cantón, *El parlamento*, p. 19; Sívori, *La fundación*, pp. 13–16; Gómez, *Significación*, p. 8; Puiggrós, *Historia crítica*, pp. 90–102; Botnik, *Yrigoyen*, p. 19, Romero, "El surgimiento," pp. 17–18, 22; G. Del Mazo, *El Radicalismo: Ensayo sobre su historia y doctrina*, Buenos Aires, 1957, Vol. 1, pp. 56–59.

20 O. Cornblit, "La opción conservadora en la política argentina," *Desarrollo Económico*, Vol. 14, N. 56, 1975, pp. 603–628; C.A. Cabral, *Alem, Informe sobre la frustración argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1967, pp. 22, 29; E. Gallo, "El Roquismo: 1880–1916," *Todo es Historia*, N. 100, September 1975, p. 27; Remmer, *Party Competition*, pp. 27–31; M. Szuchman, *Mobility and Integration in Urban Argentina: Córdoba in the Liberal Era*, Austin and London, 1980, p. 174; Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, p. 44; Gallo and Sigal, "La formación," pp. 179–187; P. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy: Conflict among Political Elites, 1904–1955*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1974, p. 9; A.M. Mustapic, "Conflictos institucionales durante el primer gobierno radical: 1916–1922," *Desarrollo Económico*, Vol. 24, N. 93 (April–June), 1984, pp. 85–108.

21 Richmond, *Carlos Pellegrini*, p. 41.

22 R.J. Alexander, *Latin American Political Parties*, New York, 1973, pp. 82–83.

Under the standard interpretation, the UCR made a profound impact on Argentina's political system. The foundation of the party in the 1890s signaled the birth of modern political parties in Argentina and the UCR has often been portrayed as the major contributor to the country's political development.<sup>23</sup> Against this view, it has also been argued that a competitive political system did not arise until after 1912,<sup>24</sup> that 1890 was the epilogue of 1880 rather than the prologue to 1912,<sup>25</sup> and that the UCR was, in its formative period, a political failure as it did not succeed in producing any significant changes in social and political structures.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, most accounts of the Radical Party have insisted in portraying the party as uniquely responsible for the introduction of modern democracy in Argentina.<sup>27</sup>

Most works on this period share a view of Argentine history as a dichotomy between a landed oligarchy and a newly emerged middle class, between a party fighting for modern notions of representative democracy and a reactionary alternative: the PAN. In this light, history tends to divide into oppressors and oppressed, oligarchs and democrats, conservatives and modernisers, corruption and moral purity. But to remove the history of the Radical Party from its proper political context in this way and to assume that the UCR was the "agent of modernization" of Argentina's political traditions is to distort the concerns and aims of its members and to oversimplify the country's political history.

There are many explanations for the persistence of this standard interpretation of this period of Argentine history in general, and of the nature of the UCR in particular. There has been a remarkable absence of detailed studies on the political parties, not only of the formative period of the UCR, but also of the PAN and of the Socialist Party.<sup>28</sup> In the particular case of the Radical Party, as already mentioned, historians have

23 O. Cornblit and E. Gallo, "La generación del ochenta y su proyecto: Antecedentes y consecuencias," *Desarrollo Económico*, January–March 1962, Vol. 1, N. 4, pp. 24; J. Bianco, *La doctrina Radical*, Buenos Aires, 1927, p. 19. Luna, "UCR," pp. 10–11; Del Mazo, *El Radicalismo*, p. 21; Peralta, *La Unión Cívica Radical*, p. 7; A.R. Calviño, *La crisis de 1890 a través del Congreso: La preparación hasta 1889*, Buenos Aires, 1989, p. 7.

24 The most explicit interpretation of this argument can be found in Remmer, *Party Competition*, p. 33.

25 H. Sabato, "La Revolución del 90: Prólogo o epílogo," *Punto de vista*, September 1990, pp. 27–31; Ramos, *Revolución y contrarevolución*, Vol. I, pp. 313–397; and his *Del patriciado*, pp. 169–204.

26 Richmond, *Carlos Pellegrini*, p. 41; Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, p. 44.

27 See, for example, Del Mazo, *El radicalismo*; Sommi, *La Revolución*.

28 While the history of the PAN still awaits to be written, the main work on the Socialist Party continues to be R. Walter, *The Socialist Party in Argentina. 1890–1930*, Texas, 1977. The remarkable absence of studies of the political parties of the period had been noticed by E. Gallo, "Historiografía política: 1880–1900," *Comité Internacional de Ciencias Históricas (Comité Argentino)*, *Historiografía Argentina (1958–1988)*. *Una evaluación crítica de la producción histórica Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1990, pp. 332–333.



focused their attention on the period beginning in 1916, devoting only a few introductory paragraphs to the party's founding years, and assuming an ill-grounded continuation of leadership, purposes, strategies, and nature. It also cannot be ignored that the UCR is a party that even today plays a major role in the country's political system, and its history has been many times reconstructed to fulfil partisan needs.<sup>29</sup> Also, the name "Radical" seems to have led historians to concentrate on its innovative aspects. This has produced two different results. Some historians have emphasized everything that was new about the Radicals, attributing to the party aims and beliefs of which its members were hardly aware.<sup>30</sup> Others, however, disappointed at the limited changes the Radicals aimed for, have belittled the significance of the formative period of the party.<sup>31</sup>

This book argues that the UCR was not created to represent any particular social sector. There were no differences in social class between the leading members of the UCR and those of other political organizations. The socio-economic characteristics of the Buenos Aires electorate seems to have played no decisive role in the voting preferences of UCR supporters of the 1890s. The discourse of the leaders of the Radical Party shows no aspiration to represent a particular social class, and UCR congressmen of the 1890s manifested no particular concern for "the social question" or for any particular social or economic sector. Against the traditional interpretations, it is also argued that the ideology of the UCR had a specific content. Based on a few printed party manifestos, previous works have tended to reduce the UCR's ideology to vague and moralistic formulations of a fight for democracy, decentralization of power, and clean administrative procedures. Furthermore, previous works have also ascribed to the vocabulary used by the party anachronistic interpretations, imposing on the UCR a set of aims party leaders did not have. These works, therefore, fail to recognize that what is important is not so much the words employed in political discourse, but the meaning of these words in the vocabulary of a group or society, the nature and range of the criteria in which these words are employed, and the circumstances in which they have been used.<sup>32</sup>

29 Most works on the UCR have been written by members of the Radical Party, the main examples being Del Mazo's *El radicalismo*, the 8 volumes of *Mensaje y Destino*, Buenos Aires, 1946, and the 12 volumes of *Pueblo y Gobierno*, Buenos Aires, 1956. See also the listing of works on the UCR in Giacabone, *Manual bibliográfico*.

30 See, for example, Aramburu, "Historia," pp. 153–162; Richmond's suggestion that Alem sought for a "social revolution" and that the Radicals campaigned for electoral reform, *Carlos Pellegrini*, pp. 40–41; Sommi's classical interpretation of the UCR's goal of modern democracy, *La Revolución*, p. 160.

31 The main examples of this are Remmer, *Party Competition*, p. 33; Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, p. 44.

32 Quentin Skinner, "Language and Political Change," in T. Ball and J. Farr (eds.), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 6–23.

The main objective of this book is to offer a detailed history of the UCR in the 1890s and, through it, to provide a clearer understanding of the politics of late nineteenth-century Argentina. The book places the formation of the UCR in its historical context, describes how and why the party was organized, and assesses its impact on the country's political development. The book also examines other previously neglected aspects of the party's history. The UCR of those years acted on different fronts. It actively participated in the public debate concerning the country's political, institutional, and economic past, present, and future that took place in the political press. It also contested elections in the city and Province of Buenos Aires with significant success, exercised an active opposition in Congress, organized a series of uprisings threatening the constitutional order, and gained public support with its fiery rhetoric and public calls to take up arms against the government – a task that appeared impossible at the time.<sup>33</sup> The study of such a versatile organization demands the combination of different approaches, ranging from discourse analysis to statistical methods.

Special attention has been devoted to the UCR's public discourse. Central to this work is the idea that one of the main aspects that divided the UCR from other political parties were the political and economic principles articulated by the party. A series of circumstances prompted a group of men to organize the Radical Party, but it was the ideology of the party that sculpted its identity. By ideology I mean not a coherent intellectual doctrine, but a loose association of ideas destined to gain support, to construct a shared belief, to generate enthusiasms, to inspire action. Ideologies define roles, rank values, and create identities for organizations grouped around them.<sup>34</sup> The party's ideology has been mainly reconstructed through the pages of the UCR's newspaper, *El Argentino*, the speeches of party leaders, party manifestos, and congressional debates. The printed words and the public speeches were a constitutive element of the country's politics and played an active role in shaping it.

The UCR built a public political discourse which reconstructed a version of the country's political past, present, and future that contrasted sharply with the ideas expressed by the PAN. However, the UCR did not seek radical institutional, political, and/or social change. The radicals portrayed themselves as the guardians of Argentina's political tradition and constitutional principles as defined in 1853 rather than as the moderniz-

33 To launch a party with such characteristics had seemed impossible since the 1870s. See T. Halperín Donghi, "Una nación para el desierto argentino," *Proyecto y construcción de una nación*, Caracas, 1980, pp. lxxii–lxxiii.

34 Today's common distinction between the intellectual and the ideological derives from C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, London, 1973.



ers of the country's political system. These principles had, in their view, been corrupted by the two presidents of the 1880s. The radicals claimed that the PAN's consolidation of its hold on Argentina during the 1880s, combined with the institutional, political, economic, and social changes that took place during that decade, had undermined the country's institutions. Argentina's federal organization had been, they claimed, betrayed by the state-building process and by the centralization of power in the hands of the national executive. The country had been invaded by a new official public discourse which valued stability and material wealth over the citizen's civic virtues. Argentina's previously healthy political life, the UCR argued, had vanished under the dominance of the PAN.

The radicals claimed that this state of affairs justified the use of violence to topple the government. Their public defense of the use of violence and the series of revolutions they organized against the government generated intense public debate during the 1890s. All political parties became involved in an agitated public struggle for the appropriation of legitimacy and fought to impose their own interpretation of the country's history and of its current development.<sup>35</sup> This debate, and the revolutions the radicals organized throughout the country, clearly defined the differences between the UCR and the PAN and pushed them into irreconcilable positions. The radicals' defense of the use of violence became the party's distinguishing feature, producing the most enduring division between the UCR and the other political parties. Indeed, the UCR's claim that violence against the government was legitimate not only resulted in confrontations between the radicals and the PAN but also isolated the UCR from other political organizations that at different times opposed the government. These parties and factions agreed with many of the Radical's criticisms against the PAN, but they also publicly opposed the radicals' revolutionary strategy.

The emphasis on the radicals' political discourse in explaining the formation of the UCR does not imply neglecting the economic and social circumstances in which the party emerged or a reduction of politics of the period to a competition between political discourses.<sup>36</sup> The profound economic and social changes experienced by Argentina during the last decades of the nineteenth century naturally affected the organization of the party.

35 The relevance of this type of struggle has been marked by R. Chartier, *Cultural History*, Cambridge 1988, p. 5.

36 Here I followed the criticisms of Sewell, among others, to the reductionist tendencies witnessed in some of the leading studies of discourse analysis, such as Furet, Baker, and Hunt. W.H. Sewell, Jr., *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyès and What Is the Third Estate?*, Durham and London, 1994, pp. 26–37; F. Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, Cambridge, 1981; L. Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, Berkeley, 1984; K.M. Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1990.

As a party of opposition, the UCR never possessed the resources available to the party in government, such as large government subscriptions to the party newspaper, easy access to credit for campaigns, the distribution of public appointments in exchange for support, or the control of the police and the army. The UCR was the first national party with a permanent party structure solely sustained by the private resources of its leaders and from public appeals and campaigns. This was only possible by the existence of a more affluent society whose members could invest in party organization and whose followers could buy and read newspapers and contribute to the campaigns. It cannot be a coincidence that the party's main strongholds were located in the more developed areas of the country, such as the city and Province of Buenos Aires, south of Santa Fe, Córdoba, and Mendoza, areas with higher literacy rates, greater affluence and denser populations. The significant socio-economic contrasts within the country profoundly affected the party's possibilities of growth and also affected the strategies favored by the UCR in different provinces. Furthermore, it shall not be forgotten that the UCR emerged during the deepest economic crisis the country experienced in the late nineteenth century, a crisis, as its leaders acknowledged, that was a significant aid to the formation of an opposition party. However, the economic and social circumstances in which the UCR emerged should not be taken as evidence that the birth of the Radical Party resulted from clear-cut conflicts between, for example, rural and urban movements or different social classes.<sup>37</sup>

This book explores other previous neglected areas of the formation of the UCR. It has been commonly assumed that the UCR did not compete in elections until the electoral reform of 1912. However, as we shall see, the UCR regularly contested elections during the 1890s in the city and Province of Buenos Aires, and proved itself a successful electoral organization. Quantitative analysis of these elections sheds new light on the electoral politics of Buenos Aires of the 1890s and on the nature of the social basis of the UCR's electoral support. The party's electoral success meant that a significant number of Radical representatives sat in the National Congress, constituting an important minority in the Chambers of Deputies during 1894 and 1895. A close analysis of their conduct adds a new perspective on the nature and purposes of the party. The UCR engaged in public debate on economic policy that transcended the walls of Congress, revealing another significant ideological contrast with the government. Having been previously thought of as silent on economic matters, analysis of congressional debates shows a Radical Party which vehemently defended free trade against what they thought was excessive government protectionism. The performance of the UCR in Congress also displayed a

37 Remmer, *Party Competition*, pp. 59 and 87.

party unconcerned for introducing profound institutional or political changes in the country. Their actions, instead, intended to minimize those institutional devices which the party in government could (and did) use for its own benefit, such as federal interventions (i.e., the faculty of the central government to intervene in the political affairs of the provinces) and the deployment of the national army in the provinces for political purposes.

As has been mentioned, one of the distinctive features of the UCR was its public defense of the use of violence against the government. This was not a mere theoretical defense; the radicals acted on their words. The UCR organized a series of uprisings during the decade keeping the government in constant alert. Although many revolts were plotted during these years, the most destabilizing uprisings took place in 1893. These are studied here in detail. Close attention is also paid to the constant negotiations that took place during the 1890s, both inside the higher ranks of each of the contesting parties as well as between them. The UCR emerged during a period of instability marked by the political and economic crisis of 1890, when there was no dominant leader or political party. The Radical Party came to prominence over the course of a decade during which the PAN was internally divided and all participants, including the UCR leaders, engaged in intense political maneuvering in their efforts to gain political control. The constant tensions within different factions of the UCR, which eventually brought its collapse after Alem's death, are also crucial in explaining the debate that took place inside the party on the alternative strategies it could follow. If all these negotiations inside and outside the UCR are described here with a detail that the reader could at times find tedious, it is because they formed an essential part of the political realm, of the same degree of significance as the public speeches, the electoral campaigns, and the revolutions.

The contents of this book are organized in the following way. Chapter 1 offers an analysis of the institutional, economic, social, political, and ideological changes experienced by Argentina in the 1880s. It reexamines received views on the political dynamics of the period and reconstructs the climate in which the Radical Party emerged. There follows in Chapter 2 a detailed account of the presidency of Miguel Juárez Celman (1886–1890), the formation of the Civic Union, and Juárez Celman's downfall after the July Revolution (1890). An analysis of the complex circumstances that led to the formation of the UCR is offered in Chapter 3. This pays close attention to the post-Juárez Celman political scene, analyzes the adoption of internal organization in the political parties, and estimates its impact on the country's political practices. The chapter closes with an account of the political strength of the different contemporary factions,

reconstructing the electoral deal between Roca and Mitre for the presidential elections of 1892 that resulted in the schism in the Civic Union and the formation of the Argentine Radical Party.

Answers to questions about who the radicals were, what they did, and why are provided in Chapter 4. The first section describes the principal members of the UCR, offering more detailed analysis of its two main leaders, Leandro Alem and Bernardo de Irigoyen. It also provides a study of the political discourse of the UCR, placing in context the notions of "revolution," "clean elections," and "democracy" and offering a clearer understanding of the party's aims. The chapter ends with a description of the radical's revolutionary uprisings of July and September 1893 and analyzes the implications of their defeat for both the party and national politics. Chapter 5 focuses on the activities of the Radical Party between late 1893 and early 1896, a period particularly neglected in previous studies. It is argued that the party's incipient decline was due less to the military defeats of 1893 than to the party's failure to adapt its old revolutionary rhetoric and methods to the new situation. The second section of the chapter describes the electoral performance of the Radical Party in the city of Buenos Aires during the 1890s, and the insight this offers into nineteenth-century electoral politics. The chapter concludes with a study of the Radical Party in Congress, examining its proposals and speeches in the Chamber of Deputies, in particular the Radicals' campaign in favor of free trade.

The final chapter begins with an analysis of the friction within the UCR that led to its gradual decline after 1893. This friction increased after Alem's death in 1896 and diminished support for the party, particularly in the provinces. These internal divisions damaged the party's electoral performance and its role as an opposition party in the National Congress. The chapter also examines the bargaining process that took place between the two main factions of the UCR (those of Bernardo de Irigoyen and Hipólito Yrigoyen) for the leadership of the party, and between these factions and the UCN and the PAN over national politics. The section also offers an overview of events between 1898 and 1916, analyzing the differences between Alem's and Yrigoyen's UCR. The conclusions are summarized in the final section.



## The Political Arena

Thomas Turner, the River Plate correspondent of *The Times* in the 1880s, suggested in his memoirs:

There are many otherwise well-informed persons, we believe, who still entertain the antiquated notion that the Argentine Republic is a wild and lawless region, of vast territorial extent, sparsely populated, and mainly the resort of desperate characters, ready at any moment to break out into political revolt; where murder is rife, and life and property ill-protected.<sup>1</sup>

By the late 1880s, the notion of Argentina as a wild region inhabited by brutal natives was indeed out of date. The country had recently and rapidly transformed. Certain institutional, economic, and social changes in fact predated the 1880s. By then, the new National Constitution had been in force for two decades and three presidents had been elected under its terms: Bartolomé Mitre (1862–1868), Domingo F. Sarmiento (1868–1874), and Nicolás Avellaneda (1874–1880). Argentina had, since the 1860s, expanded its cereal and beef production and accommodated increasing numbers of European immigrants. However, in the light of later developments, the pre-1880 socio-economic growth can be seen as the harbinger of the overwhelming changes that Argentina experienced during the 1880s. These were crucial years in Argentine history: They witnessed the consolidation of Argentine institutions, the definition of the political system that was to dominate the country for the next thirty-six years, and the establishment of the conditions that fostered Argentina's rapid socio-economic transformation.

In 1880 the nation had resolved one last institutional issue by making the city of Buenos Aires its federal capital. This was immediately followed by a state-building process which centralized power in the hands of the national government. The decade started with the presidency of Julio A. Roca (1880–1886). Roca had lead the Partido Autonomista Nacional

1 T.A. Turner, *Argentina and the Argentines: Notes and Impressions of a Five Years' Sojourn in the Argentine Republic, 1885–1890*, London, 1892, p. 29.

(PAN), a national coalition which gained cohesion under his administration and dominated the country's politics until 1916. The 1880s brought high levels of capital investment and record immigration, which transformed the physiognomy of the country in a very few years. This transformation was accompanied by an official public discourse which justified the state-building process and the centralization of power, spoke of the need for a strong national government, warned against party strife, and welcomed the positive socio-economic indicators as a sign that the country had finally succeeded in breaking with its turbulent past.

The changes that Argentina experienced in the 1880s were of great significance for the emergence of the Radical Party. The party was organized in the 1890s to oppose the dominance of the PAN and to counter what it thought was the negative effects of the transformation that the country had undergone during the preceding decade. Thus, to understand the formation of the Radical Party, it is necessary to begin by analyzing the many aspects of this transformation.

### The Consolidation of Argentine Institutions

The Constitution of 1853 aimed to resolve the institutional organization of the country, the oldest and most troublesome problem faced by this region since the breakup of the viceroyalty of the River Plate in the second decade of the nineteenth century. The wars of independence had produced unstable governments that were unable to bestow lasting institutions on the ex-viceroyalty. Long years of civil wars ended with an even longer period of domination by Juan Manuel de Rosas (1829–1832, 1835–1852). Rosas imposed stability, but his rule delayed rather than resolved the question of the country's institutional organization.<sup>2</sup> After Rosas's fall from power, a National Constitution was approved in an attempt to reunite the disparate regions under a single national authority. The Constitution of 1853, amended and ratified in 1860, combined the main principles of the Constitution of the United States with certain features borrowed from Diego Portales's Chile.<sup>3</sup> It established a federal republic composed of provinces that elected their own authorities, and divided the national government into three independent powers: the Executive, the Congress, and the Judiciary. The president and vice-president were elected for a six-year period on a single ticket and could not be reelected for consecutive terms. They were chosen in indirect elections by an Electoral College composed

2 See Tulio Halperín Donghi, "Una nación para el desierto argentino," in *Proyecto y construcción de una nación (Argentina 1846–1880)*, Caracas, 1980, pp. xix–xxv.

3 For an analysis of the Constitution and its political implications, see N. Botana, *El orden conservador: La política argentina entre 1880 y 1916*, Buenos Aires, 1977, pp. 25–79.



of representatives of the provinces and the federal capital. The Congress was divided into two chambers: the Senate, representing the provinces, and the Chamber of Deputies, representing the people. The Senate was composed of two members from each province elected by their local legislatures and two representatives from the federal capital. Senators were elected for up to a nine-year term and the Senate was partially renewed every three years. The members of the Chamber of Deputies were directly elected for up to four-year terms, and the Chamber was partially renewed every two years. The Constitution established a number of conditions for becoming a senator or a deputy (a minimum of thirty years of age plus a certain annual income to be elected to the Senate and a minimum of twenty-five years of age to become a deputy). But it left the question of suffrage to be decided by Congress through a national law. By 1856 all Argentine males over sixteen years of age were entitled to vote, irrespective of their level of literacy or income.<sup>4</sup>

The first three presidents to rule the country under the 1853 Constitution devoted much of their time to bridging the gap between a theoretical state described in the new Constitution and the political, economic, social, and institutional reality of the country. Argentina was no more than a vast territory, sparsely populated, whose widely separated cities possessed limited and precarious means of communication. The first National Census of 1869 showed a total population of 1,877,490; this meant a population density of one inhabitant for every two square kilometers. The census revealed that Argentina was the least populated country in the Americas and (with some geographical confusion) sorrowfully concluded: "We are hardly more populated than Siberia in Asia and New Guinea [*sic*] in Africa, practically inhospitable countries!"<sup>5</sup> The editors of the first National Census also noted the low literacy level of these few inhabitants: Only 360,683 men and women out of the total population claimed to be able to read and write. The census noted with irony the consequences of this for the new democracy with universal male suffrage: Of the 300,000 citizens entitled by law to vote, only 50,000 were literate.<sup>6</sup>

The old political traditions of the country were by no means suppressed by the new Constitution. *Caudillismo*, the distinctive characteristic of which was the neglect of written laws, did not disappear overnight; much of the politics of the period was, as it always had been, stained with blood.<sup>7</sup>

4 The electoral system is treated in detail in Chapter 5.

5 *Primer Censo de la República Argentina*, 1869, Buenos Aires, 1872, p. lii.

6 *Ibid.*, p. xxxvii.

7 For an analysis of *caudillos* and *caudillismo*, see J.C. Chasteen, *Heroes on Horseback: Life and Times of the Last Gaucho Caudillos*, Albuquerque, 1995.

Presidents Mitre and Sarmiento led the national army against the *montoneras* of Saá, Varela, and Peñaloza and against the revolt of López Jordán and repressed a number of smaller uprisings in the provinces. The provincial *caudillos*, those unruly leaders who based their strength on their capacity to generate the loyalty of fearless men and who proudly claimed to be untamed by any formal institution, were not alone in finding it difficult to adjust to the new constitutional order. Even those who saw themselves as the most vigorous defenders of the new institutional setting found it difficult to accept the simple democratic principle that a contested election always produces a loser. All presidential elections until 1886 concluded with revolt by the defeated candidate. This was not only a manifestation of long-standing political habits; it was also evidence of the weakness of the national government. The 1853 Constitution had, on paper, created a national government more powerful than that of the United States, but in practice Argentina's national government found it hard to impose its authority.

One of many factors contributing to the frailty of federal government was its lack of a permanent base. The Constitution of 1853 had left unresolved the vexed issue of the seat of the national government. Given the traditionally difficult relationship between Buenos Aires and the interior, the "capital question," as it was then known, touched on the most sensitive nerve of the country's institutional history.<sup>8</sup> Since the times of the viceroyalty, Buenos Aires had been the political, administrative, and economic center of the region. It controlled the only international port, enjoyed a monopoly of customs revenue until 1860, and was the wealthiest and most powerful province in the country.<sup>9</sup> The relationship between Buenos Aires and the other provinces also had a political dimension. Buenos Aires had traditionally enjoyed national leadership. It had been

8 For the nature of this relationship, see J.R. Scobie, *Buenos Aires. Plaza to Suburb, 1870-1910*, Oxford, 1974, pp. 6-20.

9 The economic and political power of Buenos Aires in relation to the interior was amply illustrated by the six years (1853 to 1859) during which Buenos Aires existed as a state independent of the remaining provinces, following the *porteños'* refusal to nationalize the customs, their main source of revenue. In contrast to Buenos Aires prosperity, the other provinces were continuously plagued by acute financial difficulties. See Roberto Cortés Conde, "La difícil construcción del estado nacional en el siglo XIX," in his *La economía argentina en el largo plazo (Siglos XIX y XX)*, Buenos Aires, 1997, pp. 101-111; H.S. Ferns, *Britain and Argentina in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 1960, pp. 391-401; J. Scobie, *La lucha por la consolidación nacional*, Buenos Aires, 1964, pp. 154-163; B. Bosch, *Urquiza y su tiempo*, Buenos Aires, 1980 (2nd ed.), pp. 358-364. The economic unbalance did not end with the nationalization of the customs revenues in 1860. For example, in 1879 the country's national revenue amounted to \$21,000,000, of which 82 percent consisted of contributions from the Province of Buenos Aires and 18 percent of contributions from the remaining thirteen provinces. "Bullionist," 19 June 1880, *CFB*, Vols. 4-6, 96982/59.

the seat of the Spanish authorities, the cradle of the independence movement, and Rosas's home.<sup>10</sup>

Opinions had long been divided: Some found it natural to make Buenos Aires the country's federal capital, placing the national authorities in the most powerful province; others thought this would result in an excessively centralized system. The passions which this issue aroused defied peaceful resolution for many years. In 1859, it was decided that the federal authorities would temporarily reside in the city of Buenos Aires. Subsequent attempts by presidents Mitre and Sarmiento to alter this precarious arrangement met with such resistance that they were quickly dropped.<sup>11</sup> Until 1880, the national government resided in the city of Buenos Aires as a guest of the Province of Buenos Aires.

The capital question was finally resolved in 1880 in time-honored Argentine fashion: by force of arms.<sup>12</sup> In 1878, Carlos Tejedor was elected governor of the Province of Buenos Aires and from that day began to threaten the uneasy coexistence of national and provincial governments.<sup>13</sup> He flaunted the power of his province with military marches past the presidential house and spent increasingly large percentages of the province budget on arms and munitions. When, in October 1879, President Avellaneda announced his intention of making the city of Buenos Aires the federal district of the republic and of transferring several provincial jurisdictions to the national government, the atmosphere grew tense.

The capital question became entangled with the 1880–1886 presidential election. Carlos Tejedor launched his presidential candidacy on a platform of opposition to the federalization of Buenos Aires. He argued that Buenos Aires as federal district would be detrimental to the republic's federal system as it would mean excessive centralization of power in the hands of the national government.<sup>14</sup> No sooner had Tejedor declared his presidential

10 W.T. Duncan, "Government by Audacity: Politics and the Argentine Economy, 1885–1892," Ph.D. diss., University of Melbourne, 1981, pp. 44–45.

11 For projects on federalization in the 1850–1880 period, see A. Carranza, *La cuestión capital de la República*, Buenos Aires, 1932, Vol. 4; H. Gorostegui de Torres, *La cuestión nacional*, Buenos Aires, 1959, p. 93; J. Alvarez, *Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 1918, pp. 121–150.

12 Among the best works on the capital question in 1880, see Natalio Botana, "La federalización de Buenos Aires," in G. Ferrari and E. Gallo (comp.), *La Argentina del 80*, pp. 107–122; I. Ruiz Moreno, *La federalización de Buenos Aires. Debates y documentos*, Buenos Aires, 1980; Ezequiel Gallo, "Liberalismo, centralismo y federalismo: Alberdi y Alem en el 80," unpublished, 1993; N. Botana and E. Gallo, "Estudio preliminar," *De la República posible a la República verdadera (1880–1910)*, Buenos Aires, 1997, pp. 15–21.

13 For the strained relationship between Tejedor and President Avellaneda, see F. Yofre, *El Congreso de Belgrano*, Buenos Aires, 1928, pp. 32–34; C. Heras, "Presidencia de Avellaneda," in *Historia argentina contemporánea 1862–1930*, Buenos Aires, 1965, Vol. I, pp. 175–205.

14 Tejedor's arguments were published in his *La defensa de Buenos Aires, 1878–1880*, Buenos Aires, 1881.

aspirations than Julio A. Roca, then Minister of War, announced his own candidacy. He was backed by a League of Governors orchestrated from Córdoba by his brother-in-law, Miguel Juárez Celman. The electoral campaign of 1880 gave new currency to the long-standing rivalry between *porteños* and *provincianos*.<sup>15</sup> Roca won the troubled presidential elections in April 1880; Tejedor, refusing to accept defeat, organized an armed rebellion in June. The federal government confronted the forces of the Province of Buenos Aires in the largest and bloodiest Argentine revolution of the late nineteenth century. Some 20,000 men took part and approximately 2,500 were killed or wounded.<sup>16</sup> Contrary to most predictions, the federal government defeated the Province of Buenos Aires; in September, three weeks before Roca assumed the presidency, Congress approved a law that made Buenos Aires the permanent seat of the national authorities.<sup>17</sup>

The transformation of Buenos Aires into the federal capital marked the beginning of a period of legislation during which power was gradually and rapidly transferred to the federal government.<sup>18</sup> The revolution of 1880 had reinforced the belief that a powerful central government was required if the country was to put behind it the years of rebellions, revolutions, and instability. "We need lasting peace, stable order and permanent freedom,"<sup>19</sup> Roca announced as he assumed the presidency, and he sought to attain these goals by centralizing power and strengthening the authority of the central government. Other significant measures were taken to consolidate national institutions. The national army had emerged comparatively professional after five years of war with Paraguay (1865–1870) and the Desert Campaign against the Indians (1876–1879). During his presidency, Roca increased military expenditure, promoted changes in the structure of the army, and created the Military Academy for the education of officers. The national army was put on a sounder footing while the provincial militias were disbanded. A decree had been passed in 1879 banning the provinces from having armies or local militias.<sup>20</sup> The decree

15 *Porteños* refers to those born in the city and Province of Buenos Aires, while *provincianos* are to those born in the remaining provinces.

16 For a detailed account of the military events, see E. Gutiérrez, *La muerte de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 1881.

17 For the debate of the law, see Carranza, *La cuestión capital*, Vol. V, Chap. XXII.

18 Gallo, "La gran expansión económica," pp. 70–75; Gallo, "Argentina," p. 362.

19 Quoted by Botana, *El orden conservador*, p. 35.

20 L.B. Kress, "Julio A. Roca and Argentina, 1880–1916: A Political and Economic Study," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1972, pp. 91–92, 304–312. For the development of the army at the turn of the century, see G. Ramírez, Jr., "The Reform of the Argentine Army, 1890–1904," Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1987. Argentina's armed land forces were composed of a permanent army which varied in number from 7,026 men in 1891 to a high of 12,113 in 1896, and by a National Guard, theoretically composed of all Argentine males over eighteen years of age, which added 20,000 men.



had been issued with the intention of dissuading Governor Tejedor from defying the national authorities when the relationship between the two governments was tense. It failed in its short-term objective, but the consequences of this measure were long-lasting: Carlos Tejedor was the last provincial governor in Argentina to defy the national government by force of arms. However, this did not mean that violence ceased to haunt Argentine political life. As we shall see, the federal government suppressed numerous civic/military uprisings during the 1890s and the military remained a significant component of late nineteenth-century politics in Argentina. The institutional benefit of removing the army from political life became increasingly clear, but the first measures to achieve this were taken only in the 1900s.<sup>21</sup> Until then, the army was deeply involved in party politics. The higher ranks divided on party lines and were allowed to vote and to take office; they also used their arms for party advantage.

A better organized and heavily equipped national army became an important political tool in the hands of the national government. Provincial governors feared overthrow by revolution and constantly demanded the protection of the federal government. Battalions garrisoned in the provinces not only deterred opposition groups from organizing revolts but could also be employed by the party in office to prevent opposition supporters from reaching the polls on election day. Governors constantly petitioned the national authorities for men, arms, and ammunition; the government often applied political criteria in acceding. After the dissolution of the provincial militias in 1879, the federal government attained a monopoly of regularly armed force. Provincial governors became increasingly dependent on its goodwill.

The federal government also expanded its economic jurisdiction. The two most significant steps were the law of 1881 establishing a common currency for the country, and the Guaranteed Bank Law of 1887. The first successfully sought to end the circulation of a wide variety of coins and notes issued by Peru, Chile, Bolivia, and the provincial banks of Argentina.<sup>22</sup> The Guaranteed Bank Law of 1887 allowed provincial banks that fulfilled certain requisites to issue paper money under a unified system. These banks could pay for national bonds with gold, and they would then receive an issue of notes equivalent to their bond purchases. Soon the government accepted *documentos a oro* (promissory notes in gold) in lieu of gold from other banks, including provincial banks. This too

21 Only after 1901 were army officers who held troop commands or any assignment under the Ministry of War prohibited from participating in politics, whether as voters or candidates.

22 R. Cortés Conde, *Dinero, Deuda y Crisis*, Buenos Aires, 1989, pp. 158–167; J.H. Williams, *Argentine International Trade under Inconvertible Paper Money*, Cambridge, 1920, pp. 33–35.

became a powerful tool of the central government, which applied political criteria in bond purchase requirements and in determining the amount of paper a provincial bank could issue.<sup>23</sup>

A national program of primary education was established in 1882. This deprived the provinces of the right to set up their own school programs; these were now defined for all national schools by the Ministry of Education and by the National Council of Education, created in 1880. The Civil Register, until then in the hands of the Catholic Church, was brought under the jurisdiction of the federal government, and a series of laws reorganized the judiciary, the municipalities, and other spheres of public administration.<sup>24</sup> The aim was to provide the central government with the instruments that it required to exercise its authority and overcome instability and violence. After only three years in power, President Roca felt sufficiently confident to write:

I think that finally we have provided the government with all the necessary elements required to preserve peace and order, without lessening anyone's liberty or legitimate rights. This has been my objective from the first days. The revolution, the uprising, the riot, the frauds are no longer, and will never be again the sacred rights of the people. . . . Tejedor has been the last Mohican.<sup>25</sup>

### Economic and Social Transformations

In the last months of 1889, the U.S. Consul in Buenos Aires, Samuel Baker, gave Washington his impressions of the country:

There was never before so much push and movement; there was never before abroad in the land such a spirit of progress and speculation; there was never before abroad in the land such genuine and substantial development of the nation's resources.<sup>26</sup>

Baker was witnessing spectacular economic growth. Between 1860 and 1914, the annual average growth rate of the Argentine economy was 5 percent, one of the highest in world history for such a prolonged period.<sup>27</sup>

23 R. Cortés Conde, "The Growth of the Argentine Economy 1870-1914," in L. Bethell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Cambridge, 1986, Vol. V, pp. 343-346, Roberto Cortés Conde, "El origen de la banca en la argentina, 1860-1913: Efectos fiscales y monetarios," in *La economía argentina*, pp. 132-135; Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 206-250.

24 For these reforms, see Gallo, "Argentina," pp. 361-362; Kress, "Julio A. Roca," pp. 144-146, 221.

25 Roca to Cané, 17 October 1893, reprinted in R. Sáenz Hayes, *Miguel Cané y su tiempo (1851-1905)*, Buenos Aires, 1955, p. 299.

26 *USA Monthly Consular Reports: January-April 1890*, Washington, 1891, p. 574.

27 For a comparison of the GDP of Argentina, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Italy between 1875 and 1929, see R. Cortés Conde, "Un siglo de crecimiento económico de la Argentina (Algunas observaciones empíricas)," in *La economía argentina*, pp. 27-29.



Between 1875 and 1914, exports grew at over 5 percent per annum in terms of both volume and value.<sup>28</sup> A backward region was rapidly transformed into one of the world's leading exporters of meat and cereals. Three main factors underpinned these rapid changes: relative political stability, high capital investment, and rapid expansion of the labor supply.

The 1880s were crucial years in the consolidation of Argentina's socio-economic development.<sup>29</sup> Roca's first presidency marked the beginning of an unprecedented period of peace. The five-year war with Paraguay, which had absorbed great human and material resources, had ended in 1870. At home, the 1870s administrations had confronted the *montoneras*, numerous provincial rebellions, Indian attacks on white settlements, and Mitre's revolt after the presidential elections of 1874.<sup>30</sup> The decade closed with the confrontation between Governor Tejedor and the national government. In contrast, from June 1880 to July 1890, the country enjoyed unprecedented tranquillity. Although presidents Roca and Juárez Celman had to contend with insurrections and resorted, on occasion, to federal intervention in the provinces, politics was markedly less violent. It was widely believed that the country had entered a new era.

Increased stability was one reason for the influx of capital investment during the 1880s. This was the second key element in the country's rapid economic growth. Combined with high government expenditure, investment ensured high levels of economic activity.<sup>31</sup> Much of the investment was foreign; it went into transport, public works, and private construction. The rail network, for example, expanded from 732 kilometers of track in 1870 to 1,313 kilometers in 1880 and 9,254 kilometers in 1890.<sup>32</sup> The rapid extension of the railway was essential to the expansion of agriculture. The train provided a fast link between different areas of the country, in particular between cultivated areas and the port.<sup>33</sup> In a few years, Argentina was converted from an almost purely pastoral to a major cereal-producing country. In 1880 it had needed to import 177,000 tons of

28 C.F. Díaz Alejandro, *Essays on the Economic History of the Argentine Republic*, New Haven, 1970, pp. 3-5.

29 The following analysis has been based on Gallo's "La gran expansión económica."

30 Until the 1870s the Indians continued attacking the new settlements. In 1872, for example, they reached Cañada Gómez, only a few minutes' journey from Rosario, the second most important city of the Province of Santa Fe. In 1875 and 1876 a confederation of Indian tribes devastated important districts in the Province of Buenos Aires. Gallo, "Argentina," p. 361.

31 For government expenditure during this period, see Cortés Conde, "The Growth," pp. 331, 346-347.

32 Gallo, "La gran expansión," pp. 34-35.

33 In 1884, some 83.7 percent of the wheat and 53.7 percent of the maize produced was transported by train. Cortés Conde, "The Growth," pp. 331-332; and his *El progreso*, p. 90.

wheat; in 1893 it had an exportable surplus of 1,040,000 tons.<sup>34</sup> Public works also increased rapidly; growing by more than 250 percent between 1885 and 1890 and almost fivefold between 1885 and 1896. Private construction followed a similar, though less spectacular, pattern.<sup>35</sup>

None of this would have been possible without expansion of the labor supply. Between 1869 and 1895, the total population grew from 1,737,076 to 3,954,911.<sup>36</sup> This was largely the result of immigration. Between 1856 and 1930, six and half million immigrants entered the country; about half of these stayed permanently. Argentina ranked second only to the United States in immigration, but was first in terms of the proportion of immigrants to the local population.<sup>37</sup> What makes Argentina exceptional among countries of high immigration is that the immigrants arrived in a country that in 1856 had a population of only 1,200,000. Most immigrants settled in an area comprising only a third of the Argentine territory (the city and Province of Buenos Aires, and the Provinces of Córdoba, Entre Ríos, Mendoza, Santa Fe, and La Pampa). In these areas, immigration had an extraordinary impact on the local population. In the city of Buenos Aires, for example, for some sixty years beginning in 1869, immigrants comprised between two-thirds and three-quarters of the total adult population. Among adult males, there were four immigrants for every native-born man. Over 71 percent of the net immigration of this period was male, and about 65 percent were adults between twenty and sixty years old.<sup>38</sup> The 1880s were crucial for the consolidation of this trend of high immigration. During the 1870s, annual immigration figures oscillated between 30,000 and 60,000; in the 1880s, the level of immigration grew rapidly, reaching 261,000 in 1889.<sup>39</sup>

How did these immigrants fit into the economic and social structure of the country? In general, immigrants did better than locals. Until 1890, immigrants showed a distinct preference for agricultural work (75%), reflecting the strong expansion of that sector and the relative liquidity of

34 *The Economist*, Monthly Trade Supplement, 9 September 1893, p. 9. On the development of the pampas as a world exporter region, see J. Adelman, *Frontier Development: Land, Labour, and Capital on the Wheatlands of Argentina and Canada, 1890-1914*, Oxford, 1994.

35 Cortés Conde, *El progreso*, p. 203. 36 Gallo, "La gran expansión," p. 51.

37 For one of the finest works on immigration to Argentina, see J.C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1998. For a comparison of Argentina and Canada, see Adelman, *Frontier Development*, pp. 99-188. For a contrast between Argentina and Australia, see T. Duncan and J. Fogarty, *Australia and Argentina: On Parallel Paths*, Victoria, 1984, pp. 10-12.

38 Germani, "Mass Immigration and Modernization in Argentina," in I.L. Horowitz (ed.), *Masses in Latin America*, New York, 1970, pp. 291-296.

39 Gallo, "La gran expansión económica," pp. 51-58.

the land market.<sup>40</sup> But by 1895, 80 percent of Argentine industrial trade was in the hands of foreigners, who also showed a strong preference for commerce.<sup>41</sup> "Masons and builders, here as at Montevideo, are Italians," *The Times* commented. "The constructors of rail and tramways are mostly English and North American, cooks and hotel-keepers French, and workmen of any description foreigners."<sup>42</sup> Rapid population and economic growth stimulated the internal market; industrial and commercial enterprises multiplied along with public services. According to the available data, the middle classes, that is, small farmers, entrepreneurs, and public service employees, increased from less than 11 percent of the population in 1869 to 25 percent in 1895, and to more than 39 percent in 1914. Within this class, the proportion of foreigners was higher than in the total labor force.<sup>43</sup>

Immigrants rapidly took their place in Argentine economic life while exhibiting profound indifference to the country's electoral life. If they wished to vote, they were obliged to become Argentine citizens, an option rejected by the great majority.<sup>44</sup> Although politicians from all political parties regularly complained about the absence of immigrants from the elections, no significant corrective measure was taken.<sup>45</sup> This does not mean that foreigners were wholly apolitical; they chose other forms of political involvement, including the press, demonstrations, and petitions.<sup>46</sup>

Argentina's rapid socio-economic growth was not evenly distributed.

40 Cortés Conde, "The Growth," p. 333; Cortés Conde, *El progreso*, pp. 149-153; Cortés Conde, "La formación de mercados en la frontera," in his *La economía argentina*, pp. 47-78, Díaz Alejandro, *Essays*, pp. 35-40; Adelman, *Frontier Development*, pp. 22-94.

41 Germani, "Mass Immigration," pp. 300-302. In the following National Census of 1914, 62.1 percent of those employed in commerce, 44.3 percent of those in industry, and 38.9 percent of those in agriculture and stock-raising sector were foreigners. See Gallo, "Argentina," p. 365.

42 *The Times*, 8 July 1880.

43 Germani, "Mass Immigration," pp. 303-305. For a critical view of Argentina as a melting-pot, see M. Szuchman, *Mobility and Integration in Urban Argentina: Córdoba in the Liberal Era*, Austin and London, 1980.

44 The only exception were the municipal elections where foreigners who paid a certain amount of taxes were allowed to vote.

45 See, for example, Romolo Gandolfo, "Inmigrantes y política: La revolución de 1890 y la campaña a favor de la naturalización automática de residentes extranjeros," *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, año 6, N. 17, April 1991, pp. 23-54, and Ema Cibotti, "La elite italiana de Buenos Aires: El proyecto de nacionalización del 90," *Anuario*, 14, Rosario, 1989-1990, pp. 227-250.

46 While the traditional view had portrayed the immigrants as indifferent to the political life of the country, a revisionist trend has been stressing in the last years that immigrants participated in politics through other channels than elections. See, for example, Hilda Sabato, *La política en las calles: Entre el voto y la movilización, Buenos Aires, 1862-1880*, Buenos Aires, 1998; H. Sabato, "Citizenship, Political Participation and the Formation of the Public Sphere in Buenos Aires 1850s-1880s," *Past and Present*, N. 136, August 1992, pp. 139-163; Hilda Sabato and Ema Cibotti, "Hacer política en Buenos Aires: Los italianos en la escena pública porteña, 1860-1880," *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. Emilio Ravignani"*, 3ra serie, N. 2, 1990, pp.

The disparities between different regions of the country continued to be significant, in some respects even increasing. Educational levels and housing standards can indicate these disparities. The National Census of 1895 shows that whereas 54 percent of the population of the Province of Buenos Aires was literate, this was true of only 15 percent in Santiago del Estero, the poorest province. As regards housing, 27 percent of the buildings in the Province of Buenos Aires were *ranchos* (houses of mud and straw), whereas in Santiago del Estero ranchos comprised 87 percent of the province's houses.<sup>47</sup> Even in areas of rapid economic development social inequality was marked. Describing the contrasting situation in the city of Buenos Aires, the socialist newspaper *La Vanguardia* complained:

On one side is the Avenida Alvear, and on the other an immense barrio of conventillos. . . . On one side a rich and indolent class, whose only occupation is to vary and display its insolent luxury, contrasted with a working class that after a life-time of labour has no other prospect than misery.<sup>48</sup>

Socio-economic interests gradually formed representative organizations.<sup>49</sup> In 1854, the Commercial Exchange of Buenos Aires (La Bolsa) was founded and, as early as 1870, minor chambers of commerce sprang up in the capital and the principal cities of the interior. In 1866, stock raisers in the Province of Buenos Aires founded the Argentine Rural Society, and similar organizations were founded in other provinces in the 1880s.<sup>50</sup> In

7-46; Ema Cibotti, "Periodismo político y política periodística: La construcción pública de una opinión italiana en el Buenos Aires finisecular," *Entrepasados*, Año IV, N. 7, 1994, pp. 7-23; Romolo Gandolfo, "Inmigrantes y política en Argentina: La Revolución de 1890 y la campaña a favor de la naturalización automática de residentes extranjeros," *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, Año 6, April 1991, N. 17, pp. 23-56. For a brief analysis of this trend, see Paula Alonso, "La reciente historia política de la Argentina del ochenta al centenario," *Anuario iels*, N. 13, 1998, pp. 393-418; for recent works that sustain the traditional view of immigrants' indifference to political life, see Torcuato Di Tella, "El impacto inmigratorio sobre el sistema político argentino," *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, Año 4, August 1989, N. 12, pp. 211-230; Fernando Devoto, "Las sociedades italianas de ayuda mutua en Buenos Aires y Santa Fe. Ideas y problemas," *Studi Emigrazioni*, 75, Año XXI.

47 *Segundo Censo Nacional de la República Argentina* 1895, Vol. II, p. lxxxi; Vol. III, pp. 4, 7, 12. These figures do not include the city of Buenos Aires, the most developed area of the country. For a similar analysis for 1914 that compares the city of Buenos Aires with the city of Jujuy, see Gallo, "Argentina," p. 369; and his "La gran expansión," pp. 57-58.

48 *La Vanguardia*, 7 April 1894, quoted by R. Walter, *The Socialist Party of Argentina 1890-1930*, Texas, 1977, p. 3.

49 Gallo, "Argentina," pp. 370-371.

50 For the Argentine Rural Society, see Roy Hora, "Un aspecto de la racionalidad corporativa de la Sociedad Rural Argentina: El problema de la agricultura, 1866-1930," in *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana Dr. Emilio Ravignani*, 3ra serie, 1994, pp. 31-60, and for the dynamics between landowners and politics, see his "The Landowners of the Argentine Pampas: Associational Life, Politics and Identity, 1860-1930," Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1988.



1886, manufacturers from all over the country organized themselves under the umbrella of the Argentine Industrial Union (UIA).<sup>51</sup> Workers' organizations grew up in the cities, though until the end of the century their progress was slow and erratic. Until the early years of the twentieth century, trade unions were small and largely inactive on the political arena; only a few, minor strikes took place in the cities of Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Bahía Blanca during the 1890s.<sup>52</sup>

What were the political repercussions of this rapid economic and social change? As a general rule, economic and social development increases the variety of social groups competing for political influence, expands the number of potential participants, and creates new incentives and opportunities for the formation of political parties.<sup>53</sup> Argentina was no exception. In the city of Buenos Aires, the rise in literacy coincided with increasing electoral participation and the expansion of another significant component of the city's political life: the press. In 1885, the city's twenty-five dailies printed a total of 17,000 issues, an average of twenty-three copies per 1,000 inhabitants, "double the ratio of the United Kingdom and three times that of the United States."<sup>54</sup>

These economic and social changes influenced the origins of the Radical Party. Its members created a permanent, autonomous, and self-financed organization, which appealed for support to the country's population. Unlike the PAN, which enjoyed the material advantages of being the party in government, the Radical Party organized itself independently from the resources of the state. This required money, excellent organization, and the existence of a public ready to answer the appeals for support. A more affluent society, greater and more widespread literacy, and denser population (particularly in the city and Province of Buenos Aires) were all factors that favored the formation of the Radical Party.

However, the emergence of the party system during the 1890s did not immediately transform the social characteristics of the Argentine political elite or lead to political alliances along class lines. According to the few available studies, the social composition of the parties represented in Con-

51 The growth of industry during these years was incipient; see Roberto Cortés Conde, "Los comienzos de la industrialización en Argentina," in *La economía argentina*, pp. 200-228; Fernando Rocchi, "Building a Nation, Building a Market: Industrial Growth and the Domestic Economy in Turn-of-the-century Argentina," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1997.

52 R.P. Korzeniewicz, "Labour unrest in Argentina 1887-1907," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. XXIV, N. 3, 1989, pp. 71-92.

53 K. Remmer, *Party Competition in Argentina and Chile: Political Recruitment and Public Policy*, Lincoln and London, 1984, pp. 34-43.

54 M.G. and E.T. Muhall, *Handbook of the River Plate*, London, 1885, quoted by Eduardo Zimmermann, "La prensa y la oposición política en la Argentina de comienzos de siglo: El caso de la "La Nación" y el Partido Republicano," *Estudios Sociales: Revista Universitaria Semestral*, N. 15, Santa Fe, Argentina, Segundo Semestre, 1998, p. 46.

gress in the 1880s was relatively uniform. Those who sat in Congress were financiers, property owners, and industrialists, along with some businessmen, professionals, public officials, and senior employees.<sup>55</sup> This composition remained fairly stable during the 1890s, after some representatives of the Radical Party joined the Lower Chamber.<sup>56</sup> Indeed the social composition of the National Committee of the Radical Party was not dissimilar to that of other political organizations. It was only after 1916 that those who supported the Radical Party began mainly to be drawn from the middle classes and that the party's leadership began to be increasingly composed by families that had only fairly recently arrived in Argentina.<sup>57</sup> As argued in Chapter 4, analysis of the social basis of the UCR's support in the city of Buenos Aires in the 1890s shows that, although the party was favored by middle- and upper-class voters, class was not a significant element in determining electoral preferences. Only in the second decade of the twentieth century did the electoral support for the political parties reflect a clearer divide along socio-economic lines. In short, although the 1880s were crucial for the consolidation of Argentina's socio-economic changes, the impact of these changes in the country's political life did not begin to be felt until the first decades of the twentieth century.

### Creole Politics

The election of President Julio A. Roca in 1880 and the consolidation of the PAN constituted a watershed in the political history of Argentina. The PAN developed a system of political networks that enabled its members to dominate the politics of the country until 1916 when, for the first time, the Radical Party won a presidential election. Formally founded in 1881, the PAN originated in the 1870s, when leading provincial politicians organized a League of Governors to compete in the presidential elections of 1874 against the two powerful political parties of Buenos Aires: Bartolomé Mitre's Partido Nacionalista and Adolfo Alsina's Partido Autonomista. This league, known as the Partido Nacional, made an electoral deal with the Partido Autonomista, under which the latter would support the candidate of the Partido Nacional, Nicolás Avellaneda, in the presidential

55 See D. Cantón, *El parlamento argentino en épocas de cambio: 1890, 1916 y 1946*, Buenos Aires, 1966, pp. 40–56.

56 The Socialist Party attained representation for the first time only in 1904.

57 See Appendix 2 and E. Gallo and S. Sigal, "La formación de los partidos políticos contemporáneos: La Unión Cívica Radical (1890–1916)," *Desarrollo Económico* (April–September) 1963, Vol. 3, N. 1–2, pp. 212–222; P. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy: Conflict among Political Elites, 1904–1955*, Madison, 1974, pp. 30–31; Remmer, *Party Competition*, pp. 122–123. An analysis of these works can be found in E. Zimmermann, *Los liberales reformistas: La cuestión social en la Argentina 1890–1916*, Buenos Aires 1995, pp. 29–35.



elections of 1874. In return, the Partido Nacional would back Adolfo Alsina in the next presidential elections, those of 1880.<sup>58</sup>

When the time came to honor this agreement, however, the scene had changed dramatically. Alsina, then Minister of War, died in 1877 while conducting the Desert Campaign against the Indians. Alsina's untimely death caused a realignment of political forces and also left vacant the position of Minister of War; it was filled in 1878 by a young officer: Julio A. Roca.<sup>59</sup>

Born in 1843 in Tucumán to a military family, Roca had joined the army at sixteen and, by the time he became Minister of War, had carved out an impressive military career.<sup>60</sup> The army provided Roca with an arena in which to make a solid reputation and a wide network of political connections. Family ties, in particular his marriage to Clara Funes, who belonged to one of the great Córdoba families, provided other connections. His appointment as Minister of War enabled Roca to cement contacts with government circles in the city of Buenos Aires. Roca won the presidential elections of 1880 through a political campaign orchestrated from the Province of Córdoba and supported by the governors of Santa Fe, Entre Ríos, Tucumán, Salta, La Rioja, Santiago del Estero, and Jujuy. By the end of the 1870s, the country had witnessed the gradual weakening of the traditionally powerful *porteño* political parties and the strengthening of the national coalition of governors. This trend accelerated after 1880, when increasing numbers of *porteño* politicians joined the ranks of the coalition that had taken Roca to power: the PAN.<sup>61</sup> Mitre's Partido Nacionalista gradually disappeared during the 1880s and the leading opposition figures of the city were dispersed into small political groupings. With no organized structure, opposition politics was practically reduced to bitter editorials in the dailies and a few critical voices in Congress. The two administrations of the 1880s governed practically without opposition.

The political system consolidated in the 1880s lasted until 1916. It is commonly known as the *gobiernos electores*, that is, governments which manufactured elections and guaranteed victory for their own candidates.<sup>62</sup> The PAN leaders were highly proficient at maintaining their hold on power

58 For a chronology of political parties and factions, see Appendix 1.

59 See Gallo, "La gran expansión económica," pp. 63-67; L.E. Sanucci, *La renovación presidencial de 1880*, La Plata, no date, chap. 2.

60 For the most widely read biography of Roca, see F. Luna, *Soy Roca*, Buenos Aires, 1989.

61 By the time of the elections Roca could also count on the support of *porteño* members of the old Partido Autonomista, and a minor fraction of the *mitristas*. Gallo, "La gran expansión económica," pp. 63-66.

62 See Botana, *El orden conservador*, pp. 69-79.

and preventing the alternation of parties in government.<sup>63</sup> They achieved this through a series of institutional devices exercised for their own political benefit. The PAN members in power used a variety of methods to control the political affairs of the provinces, chiefly electoral fraud, federal intervention, and the extensive use of patronage.

Argentina was an exceptionally early case of universal male suffrage; since the 1860s, all Argentine males over seventeen had been entitled to vote. However, until 1912, the act of voting was neither secret nor compulsory. Electoral fraud took place at different stages of the electoral process, from the compilation of the Electoral Registers to the appointment of local judges for the election.<sup>64</sup> On election day, dead men voted, names were falsified, and ballot boxes were stuffed. The counting of the votes led to innumerable objections and often to armed uprisings. The National Congress had the last word on elections; it was empowered to decide on the validity of each one. A member of the opposition, José Nicolás Matienzo, pointed out how the judgement of congressmen was dominated by party preferences: "The vices censured are those of the opposition and the elections that get nullified are those won by people whose presence in Parliament is not welcome."<sup>65</sup>

Naturally, the official candidate had many advantages over the opposition: The government managed the appointment of judges, the army, the police, and the public administration and controlled the telegraph and vote-counting. The electoral system of *lista completa*, or "winner takes all," used throughout most of this period, made the representation of minority parties difficult.<sup>66</sup> The advantages of the official party and the discrimination of the electoral system deterred opposition parties from competing in elections and provided a strong incentive to contest power through force rather than via the ballot box. It should be noted, however, that the scale of fraud varied from province to province and from election to election. In the poorest and most remote regions, it was easier for governors to "manufacture" elections, whereas in the largest cities, and particularly in the city of Buenos Aires, the elections were known to be cleaner. Furthermore,

63 Ezequiel Gallo, "El Roquismo," *Todo es Historia*, N. 100, September 1975, p. 26.

64 The law established that men over seventeen who wanted to vote should place their names on an electoral register (*padrón electoral*) about two months before the day of election. The *padrón* was renewed every two years. For the different steps followed for the implementation of fraud, see Botana, *El orden conservador*, pp. 174-188.

65 J.N. Matienzo, *Nuevos temas políticos e históricos*, Buenos Aires, 1928, p. 16.

66 Only in 1904 was the electoral system temporarily changed. A "single member constituency" system was introduced, but shortly after the country was returned to the "complete list system." For details on this experience, see Dolores Cullen-Crisol, "Electoral practices in Argentina, 1989-1904," D.Phil., Oxford University, 1994, pp. 196-260.

the nature of electoral practices also changed over time. As years went by, the use of violence and intimidation gradually gave way to more subtle means of winning votes, such as the growth of a market for votes and the extensive use of barbecues, dances, and entertainment such as horse-racing. Thus, elections in the city of Buenos Aires in the 1860s and 1870s sharply contrasted with those of the 1890s and 1900s.<sup>67</sup>

A further constitutional device gave the PAN a means of controlling the provinces: federal intervention. Article 6 of the Constitution bestowed on the national government the right to intervene in the provinces "to guarantee the republican form of government, to repel invasions from outside the province, or at the request of the constitutional authorities, to support them or restore them if they have been overthrown by sedition or by an invasion by another province." The clause was imprecise enough to allow different interpretations. The term "sedition" and the phrase "guarantee of the republican form of government" allowed the federal government a wide margin of judgment on the appropriateness of a federal intervention. In the summer months, when Congress was in recess, the president could decree federal intervention; otherwise it had to be approved by Congress. Once the national government had decided to intervene, it could follow three different lines of action: (1) restore the authorities overthrown by the sedition; (2) recognize the new authorities if the sedition had triumphed partially or totally; or (3) organize new elections.<sup>68</sup> Partisan criteria often dictated the decision to intervene and the course of action that followed.

The central government also controlled the provinces by less direct means. The distribution of national revenue, public land, and central government credit (the latter through the Banco Nacional, and later the Banco de la Nación) was also significant.<sup>69</sup> Appointments in the gift of the national government, such as those of judges or school teachers, were another important means of federal influence in the provinces. As the judicial system became better organized and the federal government better equipped, the appointment of judges became more regular. Judges were

67 The subject of elections in the 1890s is treated in detail in Chapter 5.

68 For the policies followed in each occasion, see Matienzo, *El gobierno representativo*, pp. 304-305; and L. Sommariva, *Historia de las intervenciones federales en las Provincias*, Buenos Aires, 1910, vol. II, pp. 100-227. For an analysis of federal interventions, see Botana, *El orden*, pp. 121-136.

69 The Banco Nacional had been functioning since 1873. Its management gradually came under the control of the national government until the bank was closed in 1891. Then it was replaced by the Banco de la Nación, whose managers were appointed by the national government and whose credit was used to favor the policies of the current president. Sommariva, *Historia de la intervenciones federales en las provincias*, p. 167. More research is needed on the use of financial patronage during these years. For a good starting point, see Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 203-286.

appointed and assigned by national government; this became a bargaining tool between national and provincial governments, as the latter often tried to secure judicial appointments for political allies. The case of state school teachers was similar. Schools were important centers in the formation of local public opinion. Teachers tended to play an active role in politics and teaching posts provided the local elite with a livelihood and source of influence. Appointed by the Minister of Education, they also became a bargaining counter in negotiations between federal and provincial governments.<sup>70</sup>

Thus electoral fraud, federal intervention, and patronage politics were key elements of the political system consolidated in the 1880s. These were not entirely new features in Argentine politics. Many of the institutional devices described had been used by the three previous administrations: those of Mitre, Sarmiento, and Avellaneda. But the PAN governments had more options than these presidents. They were more affluent; they enjoyed a monopoly of force; they constructed a more cohesive system of power relations; the country was experiencing an unprecedented period of peace and economic growth; and, during the 1880s, there was no significant opposition. Even the development of the country's infrastructure favored them. As the *South American Journal* reported, "under the improved conditions in Argentina as regards railway facilities for transport, the Constitutional Government there had acquired increased stability, and was practically placed in a position to overcome any local revolution."<sup>71</sup>

It would nevertheless be misleading to see the period as one of systematic control exercised by the center over the provinces, as has commonly been described. The PAN's thirty-six years in power were not years of easy, unchallenged, uniform domination. Furthermore, institutional mechanisms of control did not extinguish political life; features integral to the National Constitution, notably the federal system itself, a hectic electoral calendar, the prohibition of the reelection of the president for consecutive terms, and the freedom of the press ensured that politics remained lively.<sup>72</sup>

The federal system prescribed by the National Constitution meant that provincial authorities, including governors, were elected by the adult male

70 Unfortunately, there are practically no studies on the role of judges and teachers in politics or on the importance of these posts for the relationship between provincial and national politics. Pioneer works on the judiciary can be found in E. Zimmermann, "El Poder Judicial, la construcción del estado, y el federalismo: Argentina, 1860-1880," in E. Posada-Carbó (ed.), *In Search of a New Order: Essays on the Politics and Society of Nineteenth Century Latin America*, London, 1998, pp. 131-152; M. Bonaudo, "La ciudadanía en tensión: La experiencia de la justicia de paz y el juicio por jurados en Santa Fe, 1853-1890," unpub. ms.

71 "South American Journal," 30 July 1890, *CFB*, Vol. 10, 96982/62, pp. 56-57.

72 See Botana's "Estudio preliminar" to the 1994 edition of *El orden conservador*, pp. xxvi-xxviii.



citizens of each province and that only residents of the province were entitled to run for office. True, such elections could, as we have mentioned, be influenced by the federal government through federal interventions and patronage politics. But influence generally did not mean imposition. The federal system protected the province from the kind of centralized control that existed in, for example, Porfirio Díaz's Mexico, where state governors were appointed by Díaz from among his friends and were outsiders rather than natives to the state they were assigned to run.<sup>73</sup> The fact that in Argentina provincial authorities had to be chosen by and among citizens of the province imposed significant restrictions on the central government's scope for encroachment. The national government was not institutionally free to impose governors. To work politically with the provincial authorities the federal government had to enter into negotiations with factions within the province. This implied persuasion rather than imposition, a bargaining between two sides from which both expected to benefit.

With the need to renew regularly provincial and national authorities, elections took place practically every year. A hectic electoral calendar demanded continuous negotiations between provincial factions and the national government; alliances were assiduously arranged, tested, and renegotiated. Moreover, the constitutional restriction on successive presidential terms, respected throughout the period, ensured the constant realignment of political factions. The most impatient politicians began their electoral campaigns early; this implied gradually building networks of support up in the provinces. This was famously done by Dardo Rocha, known as the *madrugón* ("early riser") for starting to plan his 1886 presidential campaign as soon as the 1880 election was over. Not everybody was as impatient as Rocha, but speculation over the next presidential candidate – and the concomitant set of negotiations and betrayals – usually began some three years before each presidential election and required active and continuous political bargaining.

The press also contributed to create a lively scene full of political cut and thrust. The freedom of the press was guaranteed by the National Constitution and – with a few exceptions at times of political turmoil – was respected by the national government. The proliferation of newspapers during this period derived in part from the rapid growth of literacy and the profound socio-economic transformations experienced, particularly in the city of Buenos Aires, the printing center of Argentina. The rapid reduction of illiteracy was the result of an energetic government campaign.

73 For Díaz's political system, see A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Lincoln, 1986, Vol. I, pp. 15–36. For an analysis of Argentine federalism, see Natalio Botana, "El federalismo liberal en Argentina: 1852–1930," in M. Carmagnani (coord.), *Federalismo latinoamericanos: México, Brasil, Argentina*, Mexico, 1993, pp. 224–262.



In 1895, for every 1,000 inhabitants of Buenos Aires, 719 knew how to read or write, relative to only 450 in 1869.<sup>74</sup> The progress in literacy rates and the existence of a more affluent society help to explain the explosive growth in daily, weekly, and monthly newspapers and magazines during this period. According to the available data, 224 newspapers and magazines circulated in 1882, when the country's total population amounted to roughly three million. By 1896, this figure had risen to 610. Growth in publications surpassed the country's demographic growth, placing Argentina third in the world with respect to journals per head of population. Topics included politics, humor, and religion; newspapers were mostly in Spanish but also were published in seven other languages.<sup>75</sup>

A certain number of these periodicals can be classified as the "political press," a hybrid between the mass press of the twentieth century and a political pamphlet.<sup>76</sup> Based in the city of Buenos Aires, they were mouthpieces of political factions; their birth, funding, staff, style, and demise were all determined by the fortunes of the political faction that had created them. Given that no political party or faction could attempt to compete in the public domain without a newspaper, all significant political personalities devoted considerable time and money to the political press. The political dailies fulfilled a variety of functions. They created the public image of the political faction that they represented, providing it with a voice, an identity, and an instrument of propaganda. They also functioned as a forum for the members of each faction, who found in their newspapers a vehicle for their ideas and a proving ground for their writing skills. The writers of this political press were not independent reporters but politicians actively associated with a particular cause or political grouping.<sup>77</sup>

Between 1885 and 1896, although not all continuously over these years, eighteen political dailies were printed in the city of Buenos Aires, each of

74 *Segundo Censo Nacional*, 1895, Vol II, pp. lxxxii–lxxxiii. For an analysis of the result of the educational campaign to reduce illiteracy, see A. Prieto, *El discurso criollista en la formación de la argentina moderna*, Buenos Aires, 1988, pp. 27–34.

75 For an analysis on the growth of publications during this period, see Prieto, *El discurso criollista*, pp. 28–82, and P. Alonso, "En la primavera de la historia: El discurso político del roquismo a través de su prensa en la década del ochenta," *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. Emilio Ravignani"*, Tercera serie, núm. 15, 1er semestre de 1997, pp. 37–51.

76 See T. Duncan, "La prensa política: 'Sud-América,'" in Ferrari and Gallo, *La Argentina del ochenta al centenario*, pp. 761–781; Alonso, "En la primavera de la historia," pp. 37–51; Zimmermann, "La prensa y la oposición política"; Cibotti, "Periodismo político," pp. 7–23.

77 Of the 18 political dailies that were printed between 1887 and 1895, only two, *La Nación* and *La Prensa*, survived into the twentieth century and were gradually converted into modern political newspapers. For the history of *La Nación*, see R. Sidicaro, *La política mirada desde arriba: Las ideas del diario "La Nación", 1909–1989*, Buenos Aires, 1993.

them launching around 7,000 copies into the streets every day.<sup>78</sup> They attacked rival political organizations using ridicule, gossip, truths, half-truths, and lies. But in thus fulfilling their short-term objectives, they also performed a more significant role: They made politics a public affair.<sup>79</sup> It was in large part these publications that moved politics away from private negotiations in the rarefied atmosphere of fashionable salons and private homes, away from the intimacy of political correspondence, and into the public realm. In their columns the reader could follow the labyrinthine detail of the country's political life: the private meetings, schisms, formal divisions, jealousies, rivalries, betrayals, and the rise and fall of participants in the political game. The existence of an audience motivated the factions to justify their actions, construct an altruistic public discourse, write proclamations and platforms, invite the reader to attend party meetings and vote for the party in elections or, in the case of the radical press, to take up arms against the government.<sup>80</sup>

The factional and rapidly changing nature of Argentina's political life is also attributable to the nature of the PAN. The PAN was not a tightly run, highly centralized, and disciplined political organization. It was essentially a loose and hybrid national coalition and this had important implications for the country's political life as it explains why, although all provincial governors belonged to the PAN, the politics of the period involved such risks and challenges and why the central government resorted to the mentioned institutional tools of political control. The PAN's provincial branches enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, the loyalty of its members could not be taken for granted, the coalition suffered from constant internal schisms, and the degree of power enjoyed by its national leaders varied dramatically over the period.

The relative autonomy of provincial PAN branches derived in part from the federal system of government, from the power of the governors to control elections in their provinces, and from the indirect form of presidential elections. It has already been noted that the federal system protected the provincial powers from central imposition from the national government. Each province constituted an electoral district and, given the large size of these provinces and the instruments at their disposal, their governors could generally guarantee the electoral results at the provincial level. For this they relied on local *caudillos* to organize the clientele of the party in the neighborhood or rural district in order to

78 The PAN's *La Tribuna Nacional* printed about 7,000 daily. The largest newspapers, *La Nación* and *La Prensa*, printed 18,000 copies each in 1887. Alonso, "En la primavera de la historia," p. 38.

79 Duncan, "La prensa política," p. 773.

80 The nature of the press is discussed in more detail in Alonso, "En la primavera de la historia," pp. 37-51.

obtain the desired electoral result. Sometimes the *caudillo* was a popular man who earned the sympathy of the neighborhood. More often he was a less reputable figure, and whose influence depended on the rewards he could distribute: employment, money, goods, and police protection.<sup>81</sup> The federal system protected the governors from direct intervention from the central government; on the other hand, the electoral system and the indirect election of the president by electoral college provided them with a powerful bargaining tool: A presidential candidate needed the support of a certain number of governors to win a presidential election.

Provincial governors had strong incentives to remain on good terms with the national government, but sometimes ignored them. The loyalties of the governors were as changeable as political circumstances. As discussed in the next chapter, many of those who supported Roca in his first administration later changed sides to support President Miguel Juárez Celman (1886–1890) against Roca, and subsequently either supported the newly organized opposition when it emerged in 1890 or refused to accept the return of Roca's leadership over the PAN after the downfall of Juárez Celman in 1890.<sup>82</sup>

The fickle relations of provincial leaders with the national government were also evident in Congress. As we shall see in more detail in Chapter 5, in spite of the PAN's political predominance, Congress remained a powerful independent body for most of the period. Unanimity inside Congress was rarely achieved, as deputies and senators tended to split into factions even within the PAN and join the opposition over particular issues.<sup>83</sup> The president could not assume that his projects would be approved or that Congress would support him. President Juárez Celman learned this lesson the hard way when a PAN-dominated Congress forced him to resign in August 1890; Roca failed to become president of the Senate in 1892 even when the chamber was almost totally controlled by PAN members.<sup>84</sup> The

81 E. Gallo, "The Cereal Boom and Changes in the Social and Political Structure of Santa Fé, Argentina, 1870–1895," in K. Duncan and I. Rutledge, *Land and Labour in Latin America*, Cambridge, 1977, p. 337; Matienzo, *El gobierno representativo*, pp. 233–235, 221–222; A. Carrasco, *Lo que yo vi del 80: Hombres y episodios de la transformación nacional*, Buenos Aires, 1947, p. 80; Remmer, *Party Competition*, p. 28.

82 The case of the governor of Entre Ríos, Eduardo Racedo, is a good example. He first supported Roca in the early 1880s, then changed to support Juárez Celman in the late 1880s, then changed to *cívico* colors in 1890 and finally supported the *modernista* candidacy of Roque Sáenz Peña in 1892. See Duncan, "Government by Audacity," p. 362; and Fraguero to Roca, 24 December 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 65. See also the cases of Córdoba, Mendoza, and Buenos Aires described in detail in Chapter 3.

83 For the behavior of Congress during Roca's first administration, see Kress, "Julio A. Roca," pp. 124–126.

84 For Juárez Celman's resignation, see Chapter 2; for Roca's defeat in the Senate, see *Tribuna*, 2 September 1892.

autonomy of the PAN members, their changing loyalties, and the PAN's tendency to constant internal factionalization placed a premium on strong, skillful national leaders: men such as Roca, Juárez Celman, and Carlos Pellegrini.<sup>85</sup> However, their political styles and methods varied. The two presidents of the 1880s, Roca and Juárez Celman, offer a clear contrast. For Roca, the PAN's dominance depended on his maintaining a delicate balance within the national coalition that had carried him to office.<sup>86</sup> He avoided confrontation with his provincial allies, was well informed, and made his preferences as regards local candidates clear, but if his choice lost he would simply seek new cooperative arrangements.<sup>87</sup> He avoided centralized imposition, federal interventions, and revolts.<sup>88</sup> In contrast to Roca's cautious style, Juárez Celman displayed "ruthlessness, opportunism, brinkmanship and a pronounced unwillingness to share power outside his immediate circle."<sup>89</sup> Juárez Celman was determined to replace Roca as the leader of the PAN and for this he demanded strict loyalty from the governors. His idea of leadership was not subtle reinforcement of an unsteady national coalition; he preferred a hierarchical system of command with himself clearly at the apex. Those who defied the *jefe único* were removed from their posts by contrived revolts, federal intervention, or impeachment.

The nature of the PAN and the political dynamics of the period had important implications for the emergence of the Radical Party. The PAN's factional rivalries, its members' uncertain loyalties, and the different political styles of its leaders help to explain the rapid emergence of Unión Cívica (UC) organizations throughout the country in the 1890s. The UC, and later the Radical Party, emerged in a fragmented political scene in which no party or faction clearly predominated. Roca's political faction had been dismantled by his successor, Juárez Celman, and he was unable to reconstruct a new national coalition until the late 1890s.

A fuller description of the 1890s political situation into which the Radical Party was born is given in subsequent chapters. But Table 1.1 offers a summary of the political situation during this decade. The table illustrates the changing political preferences of the provinces; it shows the factionalization of the political scene during the 1890s and the ever-

85 See Gallo "El Roquismo," pp. 13–29.

86 The following description of Roca's methods during his first administration has been taken from Kress, "Julio A. Roca," pp. 124–126, 246–258. The contrast between Roca and Juárez Celman has mainly been taken from Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 84–95.

87 Kress, "Julio A. Roca," p. 251; D. Guy, *Argentine Sugar Politics: Tucumán and the Generation of Eighty*, Arizona, 1980, p. 40.

88 Indeed, Roca had the lowest rate of federal intervention of any president of the period 1880–1916. Botana, *El orden conservador*, p. 128.

89 Duncan, "Government by Audacity," p. 82.



Table 1.1 *Political alignments in the provinces during the 1890s*

	EC	1890	1891	1891/2	1894	1895	1897
Mendoza	10	C	*		M	R	R
E. Ríos	18	C		M		R	R
Catamarca	12	J/C		M	R	R	R
Córdoba	26	J/C	*	M	R/C	R/C	R/C
La Rioja	8	C			M/C	R	R
Jujuy	8	R		M	R	R	R
Salta	12	C	*	M	R	R	R
San Luis	10	R/C	*		C	C	R
Santa Fe	12	J		M	M/R/RD	M/R/RD	M/R/RD
San Juan	10	R			R	R	R
Santiago	18	C/R	*		M/C	R	R
BsAs	36	J		M	C/UP	C	C
Tucumán	14	C	*		R	R	R
Corrientes	16	JC		M	C	C	C
Capital	22	C			C/R	RD	C

(C.) *cívico*; (M) *modernista*; (R) *roquista*; (J) *juarista*; (C) coalition; (RD) radicals; (\*) Supporters of the Mitre/Roca coalition in 1891.

Sources: Data derives mainly from Roca's private papers and the press. For 1890, see archivo Roca, Legs. 60 and 61; for 1891, Legs. 62-65; for 1892, Leg. 66; for 1895, Legs. 69 and 70; for 1896, Legs. 71 and 72; for 1897, Legs. 73-76. The contemporary annual reports of *La Prensa* published on 1. Jan. each year offer a good summary of the previous year's events in the provinces.

changing political persuasions of the provincial governors. The first column indicates the number of seats held by each province in the Electoral College; this defined its importance for the presidential candidate. The second column (1890) illustrates the situation in the provinces after the revolution of July 1890, when the *cívico* and *roquista* factions emerged. The third column (1891) specifies the provinces that, until July 1891, observed the coalition between Roca and Mitre for the presidential election of 1892. The fourth column (1891/2) shows the rise of the *modernistas* (ex-*juaristas*) between July 1891 and February 1892, after the breakdown of the coalition. The fifth, sixth, and seventh columns (1894, 1895, 1897) show the political affiliations of governors and the party that triumphed in the local election, and the gradual reconstruction of Roca's coalition for the presidential election of 1898.

This period of Argentina's history has generally been described as one of tight control by a single-party hegemony. Political life was thought to be practically nonexistent as central imposition had supposedly annihili-



lated all attempts at defiance.<sup>90</sup> However, the picture displayed in Table 1.1 is very different. During the 1890s, none of the factions coexisting under the PAN umbrella achieved continuous predominance. This led to fierce competition. The result was a kaleidoscopic political environment of constant realignments, not only within the PAN, but between the PAN factions and those of other political parties. The Argentina of the 1890s experienced a turbulent political life in which temporary alliances were constantly made and broken as circumstance and advantage dictated. It was in such a circumstance that the Radical Party was born.

### The PAN's Political Discourse

The institutional, economic, and political transformations of the 1880s were accompanied by an ideology encapsulated in the slogan of Roca's first presidency: "Peace and Administration." The new government emphasized order and economic progress. In practice, this meant the creation through legislation of a strong central government able to consolidate authority in what was believed to be an endemically rebellious country. The demand for peace, strong central government, and economic progress was not new; it had also been featured during previous administrations. However, the rapid state-building of the 1880s was made possible, among other factors, by unprecedented ideological consensus. Many factors contributed to the existence of this consensus: The revolution of Tejedor in 1880 convinced many that such threats to the national authority should be put to an end; the rapid decline of the *porteño* political parties meant that there was little opposition; and economic prosperity made many believe that the right path had finally been taken.

Indeed, there was a widespread consensus that Argentina had finally entered a new era and abandoned its turbulent past.<sup>91</sup> This was partly the result of an active campaign generated by Roca's administration. His new government wanted to be associated with change, progress, and a break with the past, and through its official newspaper, *La Tribuna Nacional* (LTN), the PAN launched a campaign to that end.<sup>92</sup> The campaign portrayed 1880 as the beginning of a new era, in which progress arrived in the form of "good harvests, new industries, businesses that require large capital and unlimited wealth, railway tracks which extend

90 See, for example, G. Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición: De la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas*, Buenos Aires, 1965; J.L. Romero, *Historia de las ideas políticas en Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1946.

91 See Botana and Gallo, "Estudio preliminar," pp. 28–35.

92 These pages are based on Alonso, "En la primavera de la historia," where the political discourse of the PAN is analyzed in further detail. From the 1890s LTN was published under the name of *Tribuna*.

throughout the country, bridges being built over rivers, rivers channelled to prevent floods, colonies that acquire their own life, expeditions to cross the desert in all directions to make a tidy inventory of the country's wealth."<sup>93</sup>

However, LTN constantly repeated that it would be a mistake to reduce progress to material development, to the construction of roads and bridges, to the arrival of immigrants and credit, or to the extension of the railway. When the government spoke of progress it meant the moral development of the people. Progress affected individuals and society in ways that went well beyond material gains. Economic development fostered a work ethic in the individual, respect for the law, and a love of peace, thus strengthening society's conservative feelings for leading an orderly life.<sup>94</sup> And progress also had positive political consequences reflected in the institutions individuals build for themselves. Modern societies developed the wisdom to implement good laws, distinguishing themselves from backward countries by an aptitude for reflection and by the accountability that citizens exercised over their institutions.<sup>95</sup>

The effects of progress – on the individual, on society, on politics – resulted from the restraining effect that conservative interests, fostered by economic development, exercised over men's passions. These passions represented the dark and destructive tendencies of human nature, negative impulses which expressed themselves through politics and which were fostered by the political parties. Politics was responsible for destruction, hatred, and wars.<sup>96</sup>

LTN claimed that the success of the current government derived from its recognition that the destructive passions of politics could be tamed only by the development of society's conservative interests. It was material progress that brought about moral progress, not the other way around; it was through economic development that civilizations were built.<sup>97</sup> "In the construction of a railway, for example," LTN explained, the government "has not only seen a commercial and economic event, but also a moral and political one . . . , therefore, moral progress is developed hand in hand with the material progress. The people's physical well being fosters and stokes

93 "Progresos que no se mencionan," *La Tribuna Nacional* (LTN), 1 January 1881.

94 "Anacronismos," LTN, 21 July 1892. 95 LTN, 12 February 1887.

96 On the different meanings and roles attributed to the passions and the interests along the centuries, see A.O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interest: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1977.

97 "El mensaje y la política," LTN, 11 June 1888. Naturally, this current of thought is not original; for similar arguments expressed in the United States, see, for example, J. Appelby, "Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination," in her book with the same title, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1992.

moral senses, and also resulted in the strengthening of the political institutions."<sup>98</sup>

According to the government, the political results of economic progress could already be felt in the 1880s. Previously, politics had been characterized by intolerance, violence, and disorder. Every attempt to build good and stable institutions had perished in fire ignited by political passions, encouraged by the political parties.<sup>99</sup> However, only two years after Roca had assumed the presidency, LTN confidently announced that an inalterable peace reigned throughout the country; governors, senators, and deputies were regularly elected in all provinces without the violence and coercion of recent years. The old politics of intolerance and hatred had given way to mutual acceptance and understanding. The people were now adverse to party strife: "Each day that goes by, the intransigence disappears, tensions are dissolved and resistance is eliminated."<sup>100</sup> The passing of old political habits and the arrival of peace to the country in 1880 were the result of material development. Roca's administration had succeeded in "imposing the supremacy of the law over the will of men"<sup>101</sup> because it had understood the real causes behind the old vices: "The civil wars, the rebellions against the authorities, the sedition that until recently had taken place without break, were mainly caused by the profound malaise, the depopulation, the misery, and the lack of employment."<sup>102</sup> By fostering commerce and industry, the government had eradicated the foundations of anarchy, and "now the time of politics as drama is over. There are no more idle multitudes plotting revolts."<sup>103</sup>

In the government's public discourse, progress not only brought peace and civilization but also fostered civil and political liberties. Modern economists taught that freedom and the rule of law were the result of economic progress. It was not true that economic development could exist only when the law and civil and political liberties were respected. Indeed, the opposite was the truth: It was love of work and caring for one's enterprise that led people to appreciate the advantages of order, good government, and personal freedom: "It is not hard to see that greater guarantees and liberty exists among the people where the habits of work are more developed and where the fruits of industry are more abundant, and that these values are more precarious . . . where the revitalising currents of progress have not yet penetrated."<sup>104</sup>

98 "Los grandes fines," *LTN*, 17 January 1886.

99 For the PAN's construction of its own version of the country's political history and its implications, see Alonso, "En la primavera de la historia," pp. 56-62.

100 "Progresos que no se mencionan," *LTN*, 1 January 1881.

101 "La fuerza del sistema," *LTN*, 2 November 1887.

102 "La antigua escuela," *LTN*, 3 March 1887.

103 Ibid. 104 Ibid.

Thus, in the discourse of the PAN, the word progress had a wide meaning and its effects were far-reaching. According to LTN, progress contributed to the development of good working habits in the individual, fostered the love for order, helped to establish good governments with just laws, and brought about order, peace, and liberty. However, if progress produced all these positive values, it was because all these concepts were tautological and, therefore, mutually exchangeable. Good government was defined by the existence of order and peace, freedom meant the enjoyment of order and good government, peace was freedom and good government, and so on. These concepts were tautological because, in the PAN's ideology, they had a common root: economic progress. Human development, an orderly society, stable institutions, and the exercise of freedom all followed from it.

The practical implications of the PAN's ideology were significant: It established a hierarchy and interrelation of values on which the government based its policies and it provided the administrations of the 1880s and the PAN with a well-defined identity.<sup>105</sup> Roca's government and the PAN represented themselves as uniquely responsible for the arrival of progress in the country in 1880, an event, they argued, that marked the break with Argentina's past. The ideology of the PAN defined the values to be defended in this new era, its main threats, and the principal adversaries.

If economic progress was the principle to be embraced in modern Argentina, it was necessary to educate the people into society's new values. The editorials of LTN repeated day after day the principles to be defended. In a new country with old vices it was imperative to teach the citizens, and in particular the opposition groups, that the old political practices were incompatible with the new era. The newspaper and the political leaders of the PAN reconstructed a history of Argentina in which all attempts at state-building since independence had crumbled under revolts unleashed by political passions and party strife. This version of Argentine history was a dark story of instability, revolution, blood, anarchy, dictatorship, and unsuccessful nation-building. It culminated in 1880, when the PAN brought progress to the country. From this moment the history of modern Argentina started.

According to LTN, the main lesson to be drawn from pre-1880 history was what can happen to a country when political passions are let loose. The country had been plagued by revolts. Indeed, for Roca, the term "revolution" summed up all the evils of the pre-1880s period. During his administration, he saw any signs of political turmoil as "embodiments of

105 Although similar, the ideologies expressed by Roca's and Juárez's administrations were not identical. For an example of their distinctions, see Alonso, "En la primavera de la historia."



the past," a past that he desperately wanted to leave behind.<sup>106</sup> In fact, revolutions had not only been frequent; they were also glorified by Argentine political culture.<sup>107</sup> In 1874, for example, Mitre claimed he was fulfilling his duty when he revolted against the electoral results. "I believe," he wrote while imprisoned in Luján after his defeat, "that civil and social wars are the only legitimate ones, and the ones that have done most for the progress of humanity, in spite of the pain they inflict."<sup>108</sup> For Roca, this tradition was a constant threat. "Revolution, my General," he wrote with disdain to Lucio V. Mansilla in 1893, "is the Jordan that purifies everything in our country. We, like the Spaniards, are innate enemies of authority. You and I probably have very little Hispanic blood [in our veins]."<sup>109</sup> And although by the 1880s the PAN insisted that the country had entered a new era of peace and state-building, the threat of recurring violence and the consequent danger to a prosperous future were never far from Roca's mind. As he told Congress in 1884:

a bad government always comes to an end, and if followed by another bad government this will also end; but revolutions are like fire: they burn the land, destroy the seeds and dry the sap for many generations, when they do not sterilise the soil for centuries.<sup>110</sup>

In the past politics and political parties had enjoyed a prime role. In the new era they were to occupy a more modest place. LTN defined politics as "a series of transactions between political parties or groups seeking to resolve conflicts, avoid unnecessary strife, gain a positive advantage, and avoid the risk of losing everything in a risky campaign."<sup>111</sup> The country had begun its road to progress in 1880 and the function of politics was to make that road smooth by preempting potential conflicts between factions. Those who thought politics a dispute between "truth and error, between good and bad" had been confused by "one of the most absurd sophisms invented by political passion."<sup>112</sup> For the PAN, politics was simply a matter of resolving practical questions. After all, Roca declared, "it is not due to the enthusiasms of the public or their momentary outbursts of rage

106 Halperín Donghi, "Una nación," p. xcvi.

107 It has been estimated, for example, that in the six-year period 1862–1868 Argentina had witnessed 117 upheavals, which had caused the death of 4,728 people. Bradford E. Burns, "Cultures in conflict: The impact of modernization in the nineteenth-century Latin America," in his edited *Eliases, Masses and Modernization in Latin America, 1850–1930*, Virginia Bernhard, Austin, 1979, p. 63.

108 Reprinted in Sáenz Hayes, *Miguel Cané*, p. 99.

109 Julio A. Roca to Lucio V. Mansilla, 8 January, 1893, reprinted in *Tribuna*, 9 January 1893.

110 "Mensaje del Presidente de la República, Julio A. Roca, al abrir las sesiones del Congreso, en mayo de 1884," Mabragaña, *Los mensajes*, vol. IV, p. 93.

111 *Tribuna*, 2 February 1894. 112 *Ibid.*



that nations maintain their independence and integrity."<sup>114</sup> The opposition was mistaken in thinking that public agitation was synonymous with political freedom, LTN argued. On the contrary, public agitation "suspends the course of the economic and moral interests of the country, ends stability and safety and suspends all legal safeguards."<sup>115</sup>

LTN insisted that in the new, modern Argentina it was necessary "to humanise the political struggle and the impatience of the political parties, and to spread more rational and practical concepts."<sup>115</sup> Since politics was a matter of resolving practical questions, political parties were to have a more limited role. They were defined by the PAN as "associations of incidental kind," necessary only for helping a candidate to attain office.<sup>116</sup> This end achieved, the political party should be dissolved until the next election "in order to return peace to society . . . which cannot withstand the unnecessary strain for very long."<sup>117</sup> According to LTN, one of the main mistakes of the country's past had been to consider the political parties as permanent associations. Now, however, "we can all see in the permanent political parties an obstacle to progress, to good ideas, and even to public order."<sup>118</sup> Indeed, "it is impossible to govern when the political parties are constantly on their feet, in the public square, debating like old Athenians."<sup>119</sup>

LTN conceded that the political system of the 1880s was not perfect. The government could not ignore the complaints of the opposition on, for example, electoral corruption. However, the faults in the political system, the PAN argued, resulted from the survival of old vices from previous times, which had not yet been eradicated by the forces of progress. According to the government, the three main surviving vices were the opposition parties, the opposition press, and electoral malpractices. The PAN's public discourse defined the different roles of government and opposition parties: The PAN was responsible for leading the country toward its grand destiny; the opposition was composed of "politicians from former times . . . out of touch with the new currents of public opinion or with the needs of the Republic . . . living from memories and traditions."<sup>120</sup> The PAN presented itself to the public as a new political party organized at the dawn of 1880 to suit the needs of the current times. In contrast, "the opposition lives immersed in the past. While the country has moved on, transformed and improved, the opposition has stayed behind, at the point of

113 "Mensaje del Presidente . . . Roca . . . 1881," Mabragna, *Los mensajes*, vol. IV, p. 3; also quoted by Gallo, "Liberalismo, centralismo y democracia," p. 20.

114 "Política," *LTN*, 11 November 1885.

115 "El medio y la aspiración," *LTN*, 19 February 1887. 116 *Tribuna*, 3 February 1893.

117 *Ibid.* 118 "En el vacío," *LTN*, 9 December 1887.

119 "Los partidos," *LTN*, 16 December 1887.

120 "Un nuevo partido," *LTN*, 27 January 1887.

departure, protesting against everything that had contributed toward achieving positive results."<sup>121</sup>

The PAN defined the political press as another anachronistic vice which had also survived from earlier times. The political dailies were the mouthpieces of the political parties: "Having learn to behave as warriors, they continue in the same fashion, unaware that now there is no public that responds to their call."<sup>122</sup> Whereas society demanded order and moderation, "the press, in the hands of the political parties, contributes to excite the passions and to ignite the struggle between the different political parties."<sup>123</sup> The government insisted that real patriotism was not to put the work of progress at risk with intolerant editorials but to stimulate people's conservative feelings.<sup>124</sup>

In the PAN's discourse, the third vice that had survived from the old days was electoral corruption. Whereas the opposition blamed the government for the state of the country's electoral practices, Roca's administration argued that the cause was the ignorance and poverty that progress had yet to eradicate. The great majority of those entitled to vote, LTN argued, were uneducated. It was natural, therefore, that they were prone to be influenced by the *caudillos* when casting their vote. The solution was not to restrict the vote.<sup>125</sup> On the contrary, the problem of democracy in Argentina was social and not political. It could be solved only by the work of progress, by education and by raising living standards. According to LTN, all the vices remaining in Argentina were the inheritance of the previous years and would "be slowly and gradually attenuated and corrected through the enjoyment of peace, the enlightenment of the political parties and the influence of public life, which knows and learns more day by day, through experience and the spreading of education."<sup>126</sup>

We have noted that the state-building process enjoyed unprecedented consensus and that, throughout the 1880s, there was little organized opposition. The discourse of the PAN was directed toward the country's recent past and the voices of opposition rather than against a strongly organized opponent. However, consensus did not mean total homogeneity, and the absence of well-organized opposition did not imply the total absence of opposition groups.<sup>127</sup> One of the most interesting aspects of late

121 "Oposición y negación," *LTN*, 4-5 April 1887.

122 "La antigua escuela," *LTN*, 3 March 1887. 123 Ibid.

124 "La lucha legal," *LTN*, 8 January 1886.

125 "El medio y la aspiración," *LTN*, 19 February 1887.

126 "Mensaje del Presidente . . . Julio A. Roca . . . Mayo 1886," Mabragaña, *Los mensajes*, vol. IV, p. 150.

127 The traditional idea of the existence of ideological consensus during the 1880-1916 period has gradually been reformulated in recent years to expose the ideological differences that existed among the members of the PAN and between them and outsiders. See, for example, Gallo, "El

nineteenth-century Argentine politics is that the PAN coalition did not produce a political and ideological divide between conservatives and liberals, as it did in many other countries. The PAN's coalition embraced different shades of liberal and conservative ideas. Its members differed on topics including the management of the political economy, social issues, and political and institutional development.<sup>128</sup> The long-term result was that most of the reforms proposed during the 1880–1916 period on electoral, social, and economic matters were mainly the result of internal debate within the PAN.

In the 1880s, then, opposition was weak. But it was not nonexistent. The opposition press and non-PAN members of Congress conducted a campaign of criticism of the government. Before Roca reached the presidency, fears of the effects of the centralization of power were most coherently raised by Leandro Alem, who led the minority opposition in the Legislature of Buenos Aires against the proposal to make the city the federal capital in 1880, and also by Félix Frías, a prominent politician from Buenos Aires, who similarly argued that

a government armed with the right of [federal] intervention and state of siege, as is now being practiced, armed as well with Remingtons and cannons, can make an odious comedy of the federal system whenever it wants, as is happening today. The government appropriates itself of extraordinary faculties, of "the sum of power" as it used to be said in the times of Rosas. In this case, public liberties are reduced to zero, and the republic is "mexicanized," a word used by North Americans to express the contempt with which they view our America.<sup>129</sup>

José Manuel Estrada, Vicente Fidel López, Domingo F. Sarmiento, and Bartolomé Mitre also criticized the administrations of Roca and Juárez Celman during the 1880s.<sup>130</sup> They argued that the new powers acquired by the national government had rendered it unaccountable and that it enjoyed excessive autonomy in relation to society.<sup>131</sup>

roquismo," pp. 12–28. T. Halperín Donghi, "Cinco respuestas sobre historia argentina," *Punto de vista*, year 3, N. 10, November 1980, pp. 3–5; J.F. Segovia, *Pensamiento político y económico de Carlos Pellegrini: Su actualidad*, Mendoza, 1989, p. 17; Eduardo Romano, "Colisión y convergencia entre los escritores del 80," *Punto de vista*, año 3, N. 10, November 1980, pp. 6–13.

128 For an analysis of the main ideas of the 1880–1910 period, see Botana and Gallo, "Estudio preliminar," pp. 15–126. On the social question, see Zimmermann, *Los liberales reformistas*; on the electoral reform on 1912, see Botana, *El orden conservador*, part II.

129 *Carta de Don Félix Frías al doctor Don José María Moreno sobre los últimos acontecimientos políticos*, Buenos Aires, 1880, p. 5.

130 Estrada, as we see in Chapter 2, was leader of the Catholic group of Buenos Aires; López was one of the most prestigious politicians of the city of Buenos Aires, author of the now classic *Historia de la República Argentina*. For Sarmiento's opposition to Roca, see F. Weinberg, *La posición de Sarmiento durante la primera presidencia de Roca*, Academia Nacional de la Historia (separata), Buenos Aires, 1986.

131 Halperín Donghi, "Un nuevo clima," pp. 22–24, and his "Una nación," pp. xcvi–ci.

The main ideological dispute of the 1880s was over the issue of teaching Catholicism in public schools. Previously the Catholic Church had arranged for Catholic instruction in these schools. After a Pedagogic Congress in 1882, marked by bitter disputes, a law was passed in 1884 establishing free compulsory primary education for the federal capital and federal territories, and prohibiting the teaching of Catholicism in these schools, whose curricula was to be set from then on by the Ministry of Education.<sup>132</sup> Soon, similar laws were followed in each of the provinces. Since 1882, the defenders of Catholic teaching manifested their complaints by launching their own opposition newspapers, such as *La Unión* and *La voz de la Iglesia*. In 1884 they organized a political party, Unión Católica, and in 1886 they joined forces with other small opposition groups to oppose Juárez Celman's candidacy for the presidency. Nevertheless, the Church issue was not nearly as strong in Argentina as it was in other Latin American countries such as Colombia or Chile.<sup>133</sup> The Unión Católica remained a small group concentrated in the federal capital and the city of Córdoba, and the Church issue did not become a significant ideological divide in the country's national politics.

The two administrations of the 1880s experienced no serious challenge. As we see in the next chapter, weak and small opposition groups organized a coalition in 1886, Partidos Unidos, as a symbolic opposition to the candidacy of Juárez Celman. But the coalition was disbanded after the elections. Only with the advent of the Unión Cívica in 1890 and with the formation of the Radical Party in 1891 would an opposition emerge that would shake the foundations of the PAN regime.

132 National territories were directly administered by the national government.

133 N.T. Auza, *Católicos y liberales en la generación del ochenta*, Buenos Aires, 1978; A. Allende, "Las reformas liberales de Roca y Juárez Celman," *Revista de Historia*, N. 1, 1987, pp. 1-63; N.T. Auza, *Los católicos argentinos: su experiencia política y social*, Buenos Aires, 1984; N.T. Auza, *Contextos sociales del catolicismo argentino*, Buenos Aires, 1984.



## Mounting an Opposition

In late 1889, a group of politicians who objected to the course of events of the 1880s organized an opposition coalition called the Unión Cívica (UC). Based in the city of Buenos Aires, the UC was officially launched at a public meeting on 13 April 1890. The organization was primarily a political front for an attempt to overthrow President Juárez Celman (1886–1890); the revolution broke out in July 1890. The national government defeated the rebels, but the president was nevertheless forced to resign within days of the outbreak.

The organization of the UC, the meeting of 13 April, and the July Revolution have been the subject of much myth-making. These events have generally been described as a spontaneous uprising against the oligarchy by new social forces intent on creating a system of government involving the full participation of the people. The UC has been defined as the political party that led these “awakened social forces” and which, given the inequitable conditions of electoral competition, had little option but to organize an armed uprising. The UC itself has tended to be portrayed as a strongly organized political party with long-term objectives over and above the immediate overthrow of President Juárez Celman. As the Radical Party itself emerged in 1891 as a splinter group of the UC, it is important to follow the organization and trajectory of the UC closely. This chapter, therefore, begins by describing Juárez Celman’s presidency and the events that triggered the organization in Buenos Aires city of a new opposition group. The second section analyzes the structure and purposes of the UC and Juárez Celman’s response to the impending economic and political crises. It also assesses the timing of the revolutionary plans, as this is of the utmost importance for our understanding of the UC. The final section of the chapter describes the battle in the streets of Buenos Aires between rebel and government forces, and analyzes the political consequences of the revolt.



### The Presidency of Juárez Celman (1886–1890)

A key figure in constructing the coalition that had taken Roca to the presidency in 1880, Miguel Juárez Celman became president himself in 1886. He had enjoyed a rapid and successful political career in Córdoba, his native province. This was traditionally a *mitrista*<sup>1</sup> province, but by 1874 Juárez Celman had succeeded in weakening Bartolomé Mitre's faction replacing it by one of his own. Once in a comfortable position in his home province, Juárez Celman helped to construct a coalition of influential politicians in other provinces to take Roca to the presidency. His reward was the governorship of Córdoba (1880–1882) followed by a seat in the National Senate (1882–1885). Juárez Celman and Roca had family ties; they had both married sisters of the Funes family, one of the most influential clans of the political establishment in Córdoba.<sup>2</sup> During the 1886 presidential campaign, the opposition denounced this connection as nepotistic, but insiders were aware that Roca distrusted his brother-in-law and had accepted his candidacy without supporting it.<sup>3</sup>

The strongest opposition to Juárez Celman was centered in the city and Province of Buenos Aires. The most important factions of the dispersed opposition hastily formed a loose coalition called *Partidos Unidos*; knowing that it was impossible to stop Juárez Celman from becoming president, they intended to present, at least, a symbolic opposition.<sup>4</sup> The components of the *Partidos Unidos* were extremely diverse. They comprised four main factions. One was the *Unión Católica*, led by José Manuel Estrada, which had been organized to oppose Roca's lay policies.<sup>5</sup> There was also Aristóbulo del Valle and his circle, which included Dardo Rocha, former governor of the Province of Buenos Aires (1880–1884). Del Valle was a prestigious lawyer of old *autonomista* extraction who had been involved in politics from an early age, had had a long career in Congress, and was a regular contributor to the columns of *El Nacional*, the opposition daily most censorious of Roca and Juárez Celman.<sup>6</sup> Rocha had sup-

1 *Mitrista* refers to those who supported Mitre.

2 For the rise of Juárez Celman in Córdoba and his construction of the provincial coalition, see T. Duncan, "Government by Audacity: Politics and the Argentine Economy, 1885–1892," Ph.D. diss., University of Melbourne, 1981, pp. 79–84. The best biography of Juárez Celman is still A. Rivero Astengo, *Juárez Celman, 1844–1909*, Buenos Aires, 1944.

3 E. Ramos Mexía, *Mis memorias, 1853–1935*, Buenos Aires, 1936 (second ed.), p. 85.

4 C. Melo, *La campaña presidencial de 1885–1886*, Córdoba, 1946, pp. 26–27; S. Rato de Samburcetti, "El Presidente Roca y los candidatos a su sucesión presidencial," *Cuarto Congreso nacional y regional de historia argentina*, 1977, pp. 222–224.

5 See N.T. Auza, *Católicos y liberales en la generación del ochenta*, Buenos Aires, 1975, pp. 72–249; A.R. Allende, "Las reformas liberales de Roca y Juárez Celman," *Revista de Historia*, N. 1, 1957, pp. 6–12.

6 For a brief biography of del Valle, see C. Melo, *La personalidad de Aristóbulo del Valle*, Buenos Aires, 1958.

ported Roca in 1880, gaining the governorship of the Province of Buenos Aires in return. However, when he realized that Roca was not ready to support his presidential candidacy for 1886, Rocha joined the opposition.<sup>7</sup> The third and the fourth factions of the Partidos Unidos were led, respectively, by Bernardo de Irigoyen and Bartolomé Mitre, the oldest and most prominent figures in the coalition. Irigoyen was a renowned lawyer and Argentina's leading authority on international law. The Partido Autonomista had taken Irigoyen to Congress (1870–1875), and he had since been a Cabinet member in Avellaneda's and Roca's administrations.<sup>8</sup> But his previous attempts to gather support for a presidential candidacy had foundered on his *rosista* background. He had served in Rosas's government, and many *porteños*, including Mitre, could not forgive this.<sup>9</sup> Mitre and his Partido Nacionalista formed the fourth and final section of Partidos Unidos. The Partido Nacionalista had been greatly weakened during the 1880s, but Mitre was still the most respected *porteño* politician; he owned and edited *La Nación*, which was, together with *La Prensa*, one of the most influential Argentine political dailies.<sup>10</sup>

The coalition of Partidos Unidos was riven with mistrust; each component had its own agenda, party organization, leaders, and presidential candidates.<sup>11</sup> When the leaders of each faction met in December 1885 to choose a presidential candidate, their mutual jealousies resulted in the election of Manuel Ocampo.<sup>12</sup> Ocampo was a respectable member of the Supreme Court but an insipid politician whose sole merit was that he posed no threat to the coalition components. In the presidential elections of 1886 only Buenos Aires and Tucumán voted against Juárez Celman. After the electoral defeat, the Partidos Unidos was disbanded.

Juárez Celman was only forty-three years old when he was elected president. In his previous short career he had already shown many of the features that would become accentuated during his administration: ruthlessness, impatience, and intolerance of opposition.<sup>13</sup> Juárez Celman

7 Paula Alonso, "El Partido Autonomista Nacional y el mercado de la política nacional en la Argentina, 1880–1886," working paper, Universidad de San Andrés, N. 18, 1999, pp. 37–38.

8 See C. Melo, "Bernardo de Irigoyen," in G. Ferrari and E. Gallo (comps.), *La Argentina del oculto al centenario*, Buenos Aires, 1980, pp. 168–169. A detailed description of Irigoyen is provided in Chapter 4.

9 When in early 1885 Roca talked with Mitre about the possibilities of launching together Irigoyen's presidential candidacy, Mitre refused to support him. See Rato de Samburcetti, "El presidente Roca," p. 221.

10 For a chronology of political factions and parties of this period, see Appendix 1.

11 For each of the factions' candidates, see *La Tribuna Nacional*, 2 February 1886.

12 At the time of the elections in 1886, many liberals even voted for Juárez Celman to undermine Rocha's influence in the Province of Buenos Aires. See Ramos Mexía, *Mis memorias*, p. 82.

13 For the best characterization of Juárez Celman and his government, see Duncan, "Government by Audacity."

would use all available means to impose his will, including violence. It was known, for example, that in 1882 he and his allies had plotted a revolution to topple the governor of Entre Ríos and that in 1885, the police, whose chief officer was Juárez Celman's brother, Marcos, had vandalized the printing press of the opposition newspaper and then tried to cover up the evidence.<sup>14</sup> Juárez Celman was a man in a hurry. He wanted to transform what he thought of as backward country into a modern and progressive nation. This impatience had been evident during his years in Córdoba. During his governorship, he had hastened to eradicate any trace of colonial inheritance; such signs of stagnation ran counter to the progressive image he wished to cultivate for his province. One of his main targets had been the Church. The process of undermining its influence began with the withdrawal from the Church authorities of responsibility for education, marriage, and the registration of births and deaths, which were then placed under government control. His conflict with the Church rapidly escalated and ended with the expulsion of the highest representative of the Church and the breakdown of the country's relations with the Vatican. He was quick to draft laws permitting divorce.<sup>15</sup> This intolerant and impatient style was also evident during his four years in the presidency. "We transform everything, we want to transform everything," Juárez Celman proudly proclaimed in 1890, "we have launched ourselves onto the road of all these transformations and reforms with the unconsciousness of an adolescent who is not afraid of the unknown."<sup>16</sup>

Roca doubted his brother-in-law's aptitude for the presidency. Given his political record, Roca had feared that, once in the presidency, Juárez Celman would attempt to undermine Roca's influence both in the country and in the PAN. His suspicions were soon confirmed. A year after taking office, Juárez Celman had himself proclaimed its *jefe único* (only boss) and proceeded to "cleanse" the party of *roquistas*, removing Roca from the leadership of a party of which he was still nominally president.<sup>17</sup> Those in key positions who professed loyalty to Roca were unseated. The first victim was the governor of Tucumán, who was not only a *roquista* but had had the audacity to vote against Juárez Celman in the electoral college of 1886. Armed railway workers, transported by train from Córdoba, fired on the police and attempted to capture the governor. After federal intervention in the province, the president of the local senate was placed at the head

14 See G. Ferrari, "La presidencia de Juárez Celman," in Ferrari, *La Argentina del ochenta*, pp. 185-186, and *Sistema de gobernar del Doctor Juárez Celman, candidato oficial del General J.A. Roca para sucederle en el mando de la República. Piezas oficiales sobre el asalto a la Imprenta la Conciencia Pública en Córdoba*, Buenos Aires, 1885.

15 Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 97-105.

16 *Sud-América*, 31 March 1890.

17 *Roquistas* refer to those who supported Roca. Ferrari, "La presidencia," p. 186.

of a now compliant provincial government. The second victim was the *roquista* governor of Córdoba, ousted through an impeachment (*juicio político*) in March 1888. The vacancy was filled by Marcos Juárez, the president's brother. The third was Governor Tiburcio Benegas of Mendoza, ejected from office by a rebellion manufactured by the national government in 1889.<sup>18</sup> By then, Juárez Celman's ambition to destroy his predecessor's power had been achieved. "This continues in total discredit," Bernardo de Irigoyen reported to a friend. "Roca, in total collapse, gives no signs of life, as our vulgar saying has it, . . . today nobody mentions his name. Unless an extraordinary event comes to his rescue, it seems that he marches toward oblivion."<sup>19</sup>

Juárez Celman's audacity in political affairs was matched by his daring economic policies. The president embarked on a strategy of high public expenditure without the necessary revenue. Many of his projects were funded by borrowing. In the five years from 1885 to 1890, Argentina's external debt rose from 71.1 to 128 million gold pesos, while the internal debt went from 47 to 190 million gold pesos.<sup>20</sup> The economy experienced a spectacular boom which lasted until 1889. Railway track increased by more than 60 percent in the period 1886–1889; immigration reached its peak in 1889; and Buenos Aires's most spectacular public buildings, the Colón Theatre, the National Congress, the Central Post Office, and the Avenida de Mayo were planned and construction began.<sup>21</sup> Taking a large risk, Juárez Celman placed economics at the service of politics. One of the most notable economic ventures of his government was the Guaranteed Bank Law of 1887. In 1885, after an economic crisis, the government had declared the nonconvertibility of paper money.<sup>22</sup> In 1887, the Guaranteed Bank Law allowed any bank whose capital exceeded a fixed threshold to issue paper money after purchasing national gold bonds to the full amount of the notes to be issued.<sup>23</sup> To buy these national bonds, banks could borrow from Europe, and they did this extensively.<sup>24</sup> The Guaranteed Bank Law allowed Juárez Celman to put the printing of paper money in the

18 For the depositions of the governors of Tucumán, Córdoba, and Mendoza, see Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 129–136; and *Documentos relativos a la intervención nacional en la Provincia de Mendoza con motivo de los sucesos ocurridos el 6 de enero de 1889*, Buenos Aires, 1889.

19 Bernardo de Irigoyen to A. Saldías, 22 December 1888, *Archivo Saldías*, 3-6-3, N. 276.

20 R. Cortés Conde, *Dinero, deuda y crisis. Evolución fiscal y monetaria en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, pp. 180–181.

21 Ferrari, "La presidencia," p. 189.

22 Roberto Cortés Conde, "El fracaso del *gold standard* en Argentina, 1867–1899," in his *La economía Argentina en el largo plazo. (Siglos XIX y XX)*, Buenos Aires, 1997, pp. 171–199.

23 Duncan, "Government by Audacity," p. 109; Cortés Conde, *Dinero*, pp. 191–204.

24 Cortés Conde, *Dinero*, pp. 183–189; Cortés Conde, "El origen de la banca en la Argentina en el siglo XIX," *La economía Argentina*, pp. 132–135; Cortés Conde, "Deuda externa en la Argentina, 1860–1913: Efectos fiscales y monetarios," *La economía Argentina*, pp. 151–154.



hands of his political allies. The boards of the banks were packed with sympathizers, who were empowered to grant long-term mortgages and overdrafts at their discretion.<sup>25</sup>

Until 1889, Juárez Celman's audacity paid off. The economy was booming and he was the indisputable *jefe único*; he had disbanded Roca's loyalists and there was no organized opposition. His provincial allies benefited politically from the absence of opposition and financially through the Guaranteed Bank Law.

However, the political and economic costs of Juárez Celman's policies soon began to show. His methods cost him not only Roca's support, but also that of other important PAN figures, such as Minister of Education Eduardo Wilde, and Vice-President Carlos Pellegrini.<sup>26</sup> Opposition to the president also began to mount outside the PAN, particularly in the city of Buenos Aires. The Partidos Unidos had been disbanded after the presidential elections, but its many factions continued their press critiques of Juárez Celman's regime. *La Nación*, *La Prensa*, *El Nacional*, and, after 1889, the *roquista* *La Tribuna Nacional* joined forces to direct public opinion against the *jefe único* and his political and economic mismanagement. Juárez Celman treated this *porteño* opposition with disdain. During his term in office, Roca had attempted to bridge the historical gap between *porteños* and *provincianos* by seeking the support of important politicians from Buenos Aires, such as Bernardo de Irigoyen, Carlos Pellegrini, and Torcuato de Alvar. Juárez Celman, by contrast, was interested not in seducing the *porteños*, but in transforming Argentine political geography, placing Córdoba at the center of national political life. He isolated himself from *porteño* politicians, and his newspaper, *Sud-América*, insistently presented them as backward and old-fashioned, the representatives of all that the new Argentina should put behind it.<sup>27</sup>

Juárez Celman was sowing the seeds of his own destruction. His isolation from the *porteños*, from Roca, and from important *roquistas*, combined with the deepest economic crisis the country experienced in the last quarter of the century, produced his final downfall. The first negative signs in the economy become evident in 1889. A trade deficit announced in May was followed by the rise in the price of gold. The government blamed the

25 For the use of financial patronage by the *juaristas*, see Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 120–124.

26 Ferrari, "La presidencia," p. 188. Pellegrini's disagreement with Juárez Celman's methods was such that he threatened the president to withdraw from public life. C. Pellegrini to Juárez Celman, 10 January 1889, *Archivo Juárez Celman*, Leg. 28. Wilde also expressed similar complaints against the president to Roca in his E. Wilde to Roca, 1889 (no date), in *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 59.

27 For the comments of *Sud-América*, see below. For a contrast between Roca's and Juárez Celman's policies toward the *porteños*, see Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 86–87, 152–159.



stock exchange (La Bolsa) for the rise in gold prices and closed it. La Bolsa was a *porteño* institution and its closing united the *porteño* opposition. Aristóbulo del Valle, his brother Delfor, Lucio V. López, and Bernardo de Irigoyen advised the Bolsa directors to take the government to court, arguing that it was abruptly departing from the liberal principles enshrined in Argentina's economic tradition.<sup>28</sup> The rise in gold prices was the first manifestation of the deepest economic crisis that the country was to experience in the late nineteenth century. Given that the crisis also had important international repercussions, it has been widely studied. In the past, the current account deficit was seen as the cause of the crisis; more recent interpretations blame the government's fiscal and monetary policies.<sup>29</sup> The economic crisis of 1890 had major political consequences: a wave of public discontent, the reorganization of the opposition in Buenos Aires city, and ultimately the downfall of the president.

### The Rise of the Unión Cívica

The closure of the Bolsa brought together a group of *porteño* politicians who opposed Juárez Celman's regime. Mitre, Irigoyen, Estrada, and Ocampo, among others, attended weekly meetings throughout July and early August in Aristóbulo del Valle's residence on Avenida Alvear.<sup>30</sup> Discussions revolved around the organization of a party of opposition, but once again personal rivalries created an insuperable obstacle to the selection of party leaders and electoral candidates.<sup>31</sup> In the meantime, a group of university students organized an independent opposition club and met regularly.<sup>32</sup> July and August were months of high political activity; the electoral register for the congressional elections of February 1890 and the presidential elections of 1892 was being drawn up. The *juaristas* had been establishing party committees in the city and Juárez Celman had already chosen his successor: Ramón J. Cárcano, a young lawyer who had headed the strategic Department of Mail and Telegraphs. He was an active con-

28 Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 172-177.

29 J.H. Williams, *Argentine International Trade under Inconvertible Paper Money, 1880-1900*, Cambridge, 1920; and A.G. Ford, *The Gold Standard, 1880-1914: Britain and Argentina*, Oxford, 1962; Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 203-240; Cortés Conde, *Dinero*, pp. 209-258; G. della Paolera, "How the Argentine Economy performed during the International Gold Standard: A Re-examination," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1988, chap. III, pp. 35-52. For the role of Baring, see H.S. Ferns, *Britain and Argentina in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 1960, pp. 436-484, and his "The Baring Crisis Revisited," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 24, 2 May 1992, pp. 241-273; see also A.G. Ford, "Argentina and the Baring Crisis of 1890," *Oxford Economic Papers*, VIII, 1965, pp. 127-150.

30 L.V. Sommi, *La Revolución del 90*, Buenos Aires, 1957 (second ed.), pp. 118-119.

31 *Sud-América*, 22 August 1889.

32 For the list of members of this group, see Sommi, *La Revolución*, p. 120.

tributor to *Sud-América* and had been close to Juárez Celman since his student days.<sup>33</sup>

It was then customary to organize banquets in honor of the leading members of the parties. On 20 August, at one such banquet, a group of university students publicly expressed their unconditional loyalty to Juárez Celman. This prompted Francisco Barroetaveña, a young *porteño* lawyer who had participated in del Valle's meetings, to publish in *La Nación* an article condemning the *juarista* youth and Juárez Celman's regime.<sup>34</sup> The immediate effect of the article was to unite the student opposition into a more formal organization named Unión Cívica de la Juventud (UCJ); the call went out for a general meeting of opposition to the president in the Jardín Florida on 1 September 1889.<sup>35</sup>

Aristóbulo del Valle and his business partner Mariano Demaría were the first to lend their support to the UCJ. They began the work of attracting the former leaders of Partidos Unidos to the new grouping. If the UCJ could be portrayed as the independent and spontaneous initiative of youth, the old problem of party leadership and candidacies might perhaps be avoided. At the meeting at the Jardín Florida on 1 September, the UCJ was publicly supported by Mitre, Irigoyen, Alem, del Valle, and others.<sup>36</sup> All the senior members of the UCJ, with the exception of Leandro Alem (1842–1896), had been involved in the Partidos Unidos of 1886. In his youth Alem had participated in Alsina's Partido Autonomista and, jointly with del Valle, in the Partido Republicano.<sup>37</sup> His most prominent political act had been a long speech in 1880 against the federalization of Buenos Aires. After that, he had played only a sporadic part in political life, and his appearance at the meeting of the Jardín Florida had the aspect of a comeback.<sup>38</sup>

After the meeting, talks between senior members of the UCJ intensi-

33 For the organization of the *juaristas*, see *Sud-América*, 13, 15, 22 July and 5, 9, 21 August 1889. For the role of Cárcano during Juárez Celman's administration, see Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 145–148. For a detailed analysis of the development of Cárcano's candidacy, see H. Viacava, "Como se inventó y creció la candidatura Cárcano," *Todo es Historia*, Año XVIII, April 1986, N. 228, pp. 70–87.

34 For a brief description of Barroetaveña, see J. Balestra, *El Noventa*, Buenos Aires, 1959 (third ed.), p. 70. His article in "La Nación" is reprinted in J.W. Ladenberger and F.M. Conte, *Orígenes, Organización y Tendencias de la Unión Cívica*, Buenos Aires, 1890, pp. lxx–lxxi.

35 For the organization of the UCJ, see Barroetaveña, "Reseña histórica de la Unión Cívica," in Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, pp. xx–xxiv.

36 The speeches of the meeting are reprinted in Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, pp. 8–120.

37 The Partido Republicano was a splinter group of the Partido Autonomista, founded in 1877 by del Valle, Lucio V. López, and Leandro Alem to oppose Alsina's "conciliation" policy. The party was disbanded in 1878 after the electoral defeat in the elections of the Province of Buenos Aires against Carlos Tejedor.

38 A more detailed profile of Alem is offered in Chapter 4.

fied in an attempt to define the new association. Mitre had originally been reluctant to commit himself. In spite of a decade of scant political activity, Mitre was still the most respected Buenos Aires politician, with wide contacts throughout the city and in some of the provinces, and also controlled *La Nación*. The others knew that without Mitre's support the new organization had little chance of success. The Catholic group was also hesitant; Estrada wanted to settle candidacies before committing himself to the new association.<sup>39</sup> These initial barriers were overcome by the end of December, when most leaders agreed formally to set up a political organization based on the UCJ initiative. Talk about candidacies was avoided. It was decided that Alem was to preside over the new organization, now renamed the Unión Cívica (UC), and committees were set up to recruit supporters. An inaugural meeting of the UC was planned for 13 April 1890.<sup>40</sup> Behind this public face, however, the members of the UC had also begun preparations to launch a revolution to topple Juárez Celman.

We have noted that the most common interpretation of the formation of the UC portrays it as a new political party resulting from a spontaneous awakening of new social forces. The central aim of the party is said to have been the creation of a new political system to represent these forces.<sup>41</sup> But the label "political party" applied to the UC by historians can be misleading. It was not a political organization with electoral purposes. It was intended to rouse public opinion against the government, but it did not encourage citizens to vote.<sup>42</sup> The UC took no part in the elections of February 1890 and its members did not discuss participation in the presidential election of 1892, did not advance alternative political proposals, and did not talk of leadership or candidates. Even after the 13 April

39 See Barroetaveña, "Reseña," pp. xxxiii–xxxv.

40 For the description of the meeting see Barroetaveña, "Reseña," p. xxix; Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, pp. 6–120.

41 This interpretation can be found in Sommi, *La Revolución*; R. Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones, 1890–1893*, 1905, esp. p. 98; J.P. Barreiro, "Las Causas determinantes de la revolución del 90," *Cursos y conferencias*, Año IX, N. 7–8, Vol. XVI, October–November 1940, p. 2000; J.F. Sívori, *Visperas de la Revolución del 90: El mitín del frontón*, Buenos Aires, 1948, p. 9; A.R. Calviño, *La crisis de 1890 a través del Congreso: La preparación hasta 1889*, Buenos Aires, 1989, p. 7; M. de Vedia y Mitre, *La Revolución del 90*, Buenos Aires, 1929, p. 7; J.L. Romero, *A History of Argentine Political Thought*, Stanford, 1963, pp. 208–211; E.G. Herz, *La Revolución del 90*, Buenos Aires, 1991, pp. 250–251; N. Jitrik, *La Revolución del 90*, Buenos Aires, 1970, esp. pp. 20–21, 114–115. Alternative interpretations of the events of 1890 can be found in J.A. Ramos, *Revolución y Contrarevolución en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1965 (third ed.), Vol. I, pp. 374–378; J.P. Oliver, "La Revolución conservadora del noventa, otro plano histórico," *Esto es*, 1 August 1954, Año II, N. 37, p. 10; H. Sabato, "La Revolución del 90: Prólogo o epílogo?," *Punto de vista*, August 1990, pp. 27–31; H. Zorraquín Becú, "La revolución del 90," in H. Zorraquín Becú et al., *Cuatro revoluciones Argentinas*, Buenos Aires, 1960, p. 43; Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 289–305.

42 This was explicitly exposed by del Valle in his "Exposición del Doctor Aristóbulo del Valle," in Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, p. 199.

meeting, where the formal composition of the UC was presented to the public, *La Nación* confirmed and expanded the definition of the new organization already offered by Mitre in his speech at the meeting.<sup>43</sup> The newspaper stated that the UC was not a political party, nor even a coalition of parties – “it is no more than a fortuitous congregation of citizens with no political links” – and that the meeting of 13 April had merely been “an accidental meeting without permanent objectives.”<sup>44</sup>

The UC was not organized as a political party or even as a coalition of parties. The timing of preparations for the revolution of 1890 dictated this. The decision to launch a revolution had been taken in the last months of 1889, after dissatisfied sections of the army and the police met with Alem, del Valle, and Demaría.<sup>45</sup> The army's dissatisfaction focused on patronage politics. Promotion criteria were very informal: Juárez Celman's closest allies would send him a list of army friends who “deserved” promotion.<sup>46</sup> Naturally, this caused resentment among those not favored. The revolutionaries' plans became more concrete when General Manuel J. Campos agreed in December 1889 to become military chief of the revolt. Campos belonged to a traditional military family and had a successful career in the army behind him; he had taken part in the last Desert Campaign and belonged to the *mitrista* circle. He had just returned to the country after spending a year in Europe.<sup>47</sup>

The UC was thus a smokescreen for the July 1890 revolt. Its members were united by their commitment to overthrow the government. There were no plans for the organization to continue once this aim had been achieved. After three months of provisional government, a general election would be held.<sup>48</sup> It was thought that Juárez Celman's overthrow would break up the *juarista* coalition and that genuinely competitive elections would then be possible. The UC was a temporary coalition formed

43 Mitre's speech at the meeting of 13 April is reprinted in Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, pp. 80–81.

44 *La Nación*, 19 April 1890.

45 It is difficult to pinpoint the time of these first contacts. Based on the letters of a police officer who contacted Alem and del Valle, de Vedia y Mitre argues that this first contact took place in mid-1889, *La revolución del 90*, p. 126. Del Valle, however, in his “Exposición” (p. 199), says that the idea of the revolution emerged only after the meeting of 1 September. A similar account was repeated by Alem in his “Reportaje al Doctor Leandro Alem,” Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, p. xlv. Balestra, on the other hand, argues that the idea of the revolution had originated first in the lower ranks of the army and the UC only took advantage of this circumstance; *El Noventa*, p. 132. It can be assumed that the decision to launch a revolution was taken around September 1889.

46 For an example of these methods of promotion, see M.G. Ortíz to Juárez, 25 May 1889, *Archivo Juárez Celman*, Leg. 28. For an example of the complaints this system rose, see those wrote by Captain M. Pizarro to Mitre, 1 August 1888, in *Archivo Mitre*, AFC70C12N.150007, Bis.

47 For a brief description of Campos's life, see de Vedia y Mitre, *La Revolución*, pp. 136–144.

48 Del Valle, “Exposición,” p. 206. This was also stated in the Manifiesto of the Revolution reprinted in Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, pp. 189–192.



by the outsiders of the political system consolidated by the PAN during the 1880s. Each of the factions had different reasons to oppose the new regime. The Catholics resented the Church's loss of responsibility for areas that until then had been under its exclusive jurisdiction, such as the registration of births, marriages, and deaths and the teaching of religious education at primary public schools. Irigoyen, on the other hand, had found out in 1886 that his political career within the PAN was of limited potential, as he would not be given the necessary support to be the party's presidential candidate. Mitre, del Valle, and Alem had opposed the PAN from the beginning. Mitre had always been on the other side of the fence, ever since his party had supported Tejedor's revolution in 1880, and, in spite of Roca's attempts to attract him to his side, he had remained in opposition. He was the symbol of *porteñismo*, the old aspiration of Buenos Aires and a *porteño* political party to lead national politics. However, even during his heyday in the 1860s and early 1870s, Mitre had never succeeded in expanding his *porteño* base to the interior, and after the consolidation of the PAN during the 1880s, his aspirations to lead national politics had little future. Finally, del Valle and Alem had also opposed the new regime from the beginning; del Valle actively from the pages of *El Nacional*, and Alem passively by abandoning political life. Alem's criticism, as discussed in detail below, was centered on what he thought were the negative effects of excessive centralization in the national government during the 1880s, and its retrograde implications for the constitution's federal principle.

Besides their own reasons for opposing the administrations of the 1880s, the various factions of the UC had in common a rejection of the extraordinary success of the PAN in building a national political system that had left little room for the opposition. The leaders of the PAN had managed to pull together a group of influential provincials that could control elections at the municipal and provincial levels and, therefore, could gain a majority in the electoral college in the presidential elections. For outsiders, the consolidation of the PAN during the 1880s meant that, unless they decided to join, they would remain outside. The success of the PAN implied that all national elections in the foreseeable future would be decided from within the PAN, and that outsiders had no chance of competing in a presidential election with more than a minimal hope of success. Until the first manifestations of the economic crisis began to be felt in April 1889, it seemed certain that the PAN would win its third consecutive presidential election. Therefore, the leading members of the UC decided to put aside their own old rivalries and organize a revolution that would topple Juárez Celman, destroy the PAN, and culminate in elections in which each of them could organize their own forces to compete for the presidential chair. As the leading members of the UC



had no intention of maintaining the new organization after toppling Juárez Celman, their campaign consisted of strong criticisms against the government rather than the proposal for an alternative political platform. The public discourse of the UC concentrated on denouncing government corruption and highlighting symptoms of the incipient economic crisis.

Did the UC represent the awakening of new social forces? There was little new in the social composition of the UC. Its leaders were for the most part those who had formed the *Partidos Unidos* in 1886. The UC was largely composed of members of Mitre's old *Partido Nacionalista*, *ex-autonomistas*, ex-members of the *Partido Republicano* of 1878, and Catholics. It also contained student groups, although there was nothing unusual about that; university students had a long tradition of organizing political clubs and participating in party politics. Last, there were members of the army who were following the tradition of military participation in party politics.

True, when gold prices reached alarming heights in April 1890, the UC began to attract support from sections of the Buenos Aires population previously indifferent to party politics. A large contingent of foreigners cheered the UC at the 13 April meeting; many took arms against the government in the July Revolution. But the UC never acknowledged the support of this new sector. Foreigners who participated in the July revolution later complained to *La Nación* that the party had neglected their contribution, even though many had died in the conflict.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the UC never claimed to represent any sector of society; if it spoke for anyone, it was for "the best known and most respectable families and fortunes of our community."<sup>50</sup> Contrary to the perception of the UC as promoters of democracy, the coalition advanced neither electoral nor institutional proposals to foster wider political participation.<sup>51</sup> From the outset, the UC had two fronts. One organized the revolution; the other fostered public opposition to the government.<sup>52</sup>

What was happening in official circles while the UC was completing the revolutionary plans? *Sud-América*, the *juarista* newspaper, closely followed the organization of the UCJ and then the UC.<sup>53</sup> To begin with, the government was unperturbed; the initial gatherings of the UCJ were

49 "La revolución y los extranjeros," *La Nación*, 9 November 1890.

50 "El Nacional," 2 September 1890, quoted by Duncan, "Government by Audacity," p. 293. Similarly, Barroetaveña proudly said that the meeting of 1 September had been composed of "the youth from professions such as lawyers, doctors, engineers, the high commerce, the diverse industries; there was the Argentine youth ready to enter political life." Barroetaveña, "Reseña," p. xxiv.

51 Sabato, "La Revolución," pp. 28–31.

52 Del Valle defined these roles of the UC in his "Exposición," p. 199.

53 Throughout July and August, *Sud-América* regularly reported these meetings.

treated with disdain by *Sud-América*, which repeatedly mocked these "citizens with bibs."<sup>54</sup> When senior politicians joined the UC, *Sud-América* called upon patriots to shun the UC as representative of the men and ideas of yesterday, the country's "eternal cancer."<sup>55</sup> The *juaristas* remained confident that this new opposition would not jeopardize Cárcano's candidacy.<sup>56</sup> The UC found it difficult to raise support; the *juaristas* had successfully organized committees throughout the city and were well prepared for the congressional elections of February 1890.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, by early January the price of gold had begun to fall, the shares of the Banco Nacional had begun to rise, and there were rumors of a loan negotiated with London.<sup>58</sup> During the first few months of 1890, it seemed the government would hang on. Roca and Pellegrini had been displaced, the new opposition was failing to attract supporters, economic crisis could be averted, and – following an impressive military parade on 4 January 1890 – it seemed that the president could count on the army.

By April, however, the economic and political situation was looking less hopeful. Gold prices had begun to rise again.<sup>59</sup> The president of the Inspection Office for Guaranteed Banks, Marco Avellaneda, resigned; it was an open secret that he had resigned after refusing to grant a two-million-peso loan to the Banco Nacional and that 18 million pesos of an old issue that should have been burned were still in circulation. Distrust of the government's economic management increased.<sup>60</sup> Early in May, it was discovered that 10 million dollars in customs revenue had been "lost."<sup>61</sup> On 29 May, from his seat in the Senate, del Valle accused the government of clandestine issue of paper money.<sup>62</sup> The timing of the attack could not have been better. First, it was directed not only against Juárez Celman, but against the most respectable member of his Cabinet, Minister of Finance Francisco Uriburu, who, despite the financial crisis, still enjoyed the trust of Buenos

54 *Sud-América*, 31 August 1889. 55 *Sud-América*, 20 September 1889.

56 The *juaristas* did not think that the economic situation could lead to the organization of a revolution by the opposition. If anything, they feared that the negative signs of the economy could result in social disorder manifested in strikes and riots. See L. Varela to Juárez Celman, 19 September 1889, *Archivo Juárez Celman*, Leg. 28.

57 On the difficulties of the UC in raising public support, see Barroetaveña, "Reseña," p. xxx; del Valle, "Exposición," p. 199, and his letter to Miguel Cané in early 1890 reprinted in R. Sáenz Hayes, *Miguel Cané y su tiempo (1851–1905)*, Buenos Aires, 1955, p. 382. The organization of local committees of the *juaristas* was reported daily by *Sud-América* throughout August and September.

58 Balestra, *El Noventa*, p. 58.

59 For a monthly index of gold prices in paper currency between 1887 and 1890, see Duncan, "Government by Audacity," p. 162.

60 Balestra, *El Noventa*, p. 63. 61 *The Times*, 8 May 1890.

62 *DSCS*, 1890, pp. 25–43. For a detailed account on the episode, see Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 272–278.

Aires's financial establishment and Argentina's foreign creditors.<sup>63</sup> Second, the attack was directed against not only the credibility and honesty of the government's financial management but also its political procedures. The major benefactor of the transactions under scrutiny had been the Bank of Córdoba, and Córdoba was the headquarters of *juarismo*. Third, the accusations threatened the success of the loan negotiations with London.<sup>64</sup> The gold price continued to rise in April; public opinion was agitated. The extent to which this favored the revolutionaries was revealed by del Valle in a letter to Miguel Cané:

The crisis has come to our aid: when gold reached 300 and it was known that false and clandestine issues were in circulation, when the speculators saw themselves ruined and the ordinarily calm people felt that the rain was also reaching them, no one remained indifferent and everybody began to shout that it was necessary to take action. There is no such thing as a tame donkey when its livelihood has been taken. . . . The agitation had taken a revolutionary path with or without the will of its leaders.<sup>65</sup>

This was the context of the inaugural meeting of the UC on 13 April; it was attended by a public who chanted slogans against the government.<sup>66</sup> The meeting was such a success that the following day the entire Cabinet resigned and a few days later Ramón J. Cárcano withdrew his presidential candidacy. After the meeting of 13 April, Mitre left for Europe, leaving the organization of the revolution in the hands of Alem and Campos.<sup>67</sup>

Juárez Celman attempted to save the day with a series of political maneuvers. First, he let Cárcano abandon his presidential candidacy. Second, as a gesture of reconciliation toward the *mitristas*, he reinstated Bartolomé Mitre as army general, of which he had been stripped after leading the insurrection of 1874.<sup>68</sup> Third, Juárez Celman introduced an electoral reform bill which, though not guaranteeing proportional representation, would have increased the chances of representation for minority parties.<sup>69</sup> Fourth, he called for a national convention to resolve the

63 Pakenham to Salisbury, 11 June 1890, *PRO*, FO 118/217.

64 *Ibid.*, 8 June 1890, *PRO*, FO 6/409.

65 Quoted in Sáenz Hayes, *Miguel Cané*, pp. 383–384.

66 Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, pp. 6–8, and Pakenham to Salisbury, 27 April 1890, *PRO*, FO 6/409.

67 See del Valle, "Exposición," pp. 199–200; "Reportaje al Doctor Alem," p. xlv. For a list of officials involved by then in the plans for the revolution, see Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, p. 52; del Valle, "Exposición," p. 201.

68 Balestra, *El Noventa*, pp. 102–103. Mitre had lost his rank after the revolution of 1874. Roca had reinstated him in the army in 1883 but Mitre resigned soon after.

69 *DSCS*, 1890, p. 4; Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 309–310; the project is analyzed in detail in Félix Weinberg, "La proyectada reforma electoral de 1890," in Enrique M. Barba, in *memoriam: Estudios de Historia*, Buenos Aires, 1994, pp. 517–546.

question of the presidential succession. The convention would have been composed of all current and former members of the national executive, the federal court, both houses of the National Congress, and provincial governors. The object was publicly to guarantee the independence of the government in the selection of Juárez Celman's successor.<sup>70</sup> Finally, he raised the pay of the army.<sup>71</sup> But none of the president's measures calmed the opposition, whose revolutionary plans were by then well advanced.

### The Revolution of 1890

By December 1889 the UC had organized a Revolutionary Junta to plot the insurrection. It was composed of Alem, del Valle, Mariano Demaría, Miguel Goyena, Juan José Romero, Lucio V. López, José María Cantilo, Hipólito Yrigoyen, Manuel A. Ocampo, Generals Manuel J. Campos and Domingo Viejobueno, and Colonels Julio Figueroa and Martín Irigoyen. The army officers committed to revolution were not a very promising group.<sup>72</sup> The Revolutionary Junta sought to find more officers, particularly among the higher ranks, willing to commit themselves to overthrowing President Juárez Celman. Alem and General Campos were elected civilian and military chiefs, respectively, of the revolution. This meant that while Alem was in charge of organizing the civilian rebels, Campos had to recruit army officers willing to revolt. As we have seen, it was expected that if the revolution triumphed, the Revolutionary Junta would be in charge of a provisional government which would call a national election after three months. To maintain the respectability of the revolution, it was agreed that none of the members of the provisional government would become candidates in the election.

After a few months of covert activities, a final meeting of the revolutionaries took place on 17 July, attended by both civilians and army officers. The meeting was intended to measure the strength of the group, discuss the plans for the revolution, and give final directives. By this time over 1,000 troops, plus a rebel squadron of seven ships, were committed to the revolution.<sup>73</sup> Compared with the 4,000 government troops in the city, this was not that impressive. But the revolutionaries were convinced that once the revolt broke out, large numbers of civilians would sponta-

70 Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 316-318.

71 *Sud-América*, 21 July 1890. 72 Del Valle, "Exposición," pp. 201-202.

73 See Balestra, *El Noventa*, pp. 131-152; A. del Valle, "Exposición," pp. 199-201, "Reportaje," p. xxii.



neously join the insurrection.<sup>74</sup> Though Alem had been in contact with opposition groups in the interior, it was agreed from the outset that the revolt would be limited to Buenos Aires. The provinces were tightly controlled by the *juaristas*; the provincial insurrectionaries were ill-equipped and numerically insignificant.<sup>75</sup> Any attempted revolt in the provinces would have little chance of success, and the *porteños* thought that, once the revolution had triumphed in Buenos Aires, the provinces would surrender peacefully.<sup>76</sup> The July revolution therefore remained an exclusively *porteño* affair.

A plan prepared by General Campos was approved at the 17 July meeting. This was the third plan discussed by the Revolutionary Junta. In the first two, drawn up mainly by Alem, the revolution was to start during the day, the main participants would be civilians, and the army would have only a supportive role. A key element in these two plans was the rapid imprisonment of Roca, Juárez Celman, Nicolás Levalle, and Pellegrini, after which the revolution would be over. The objections to these two plans came mainly from the army, who argued that it would be difficult for troops to start an insurrection during the day, when barracks were closely guarded.<sup>77</sup> Under the third and final plan, civilian and army rebels were to meet in the Parque de Artillería at 4 a.m.; they would then immediately divide into two columns, one attacking the police quarters and the other the barracks of the loyal army units. The revolutionaries would then occupy the Government House, the telegraph office, and train stations. Once the city was theirs, they reasoned, the rest of the country would surrender. The imprisonment of the main PAN leaders was still part of the plan, although two contradictory accounts emerged afterward. Alem regarded their capture as unimportant and too difficult in the light of the new strategy; General Campos considered their imprisonment essential. From the later accounts of the two leaders it is clear that, even before the revolution started, there was friction between Alem and Campos. The day chosen for the revolt was Monday, 21 July.

What was happening in government circles? After the revolution,

74 As we shall see later, Alem thought that once the outbreak of the revolution had taken place, the civilian population of the city would spontaneously take up arms against the government and join the revolutionaries. These hopes, which never materialized, were based on the reports that Alem received by those under his command for the organization of the revolt. See E. Oliver to Alem, 27 July 1890, in "Papeles de la revolución de 1890," *Archivo Juárez Celman*, Leg. 51.

75 For the work of the UC in the provinces, see Barroetaveña "Reseña histórica," pp. lxiii–lxvi; and "Reportaje," p. xlv.

76 "Reportaje," p. xlv, and "Entrevista con el General Campos después del desarme," in Mendía, *El secreto*, Vol. II, p. 7.

77 For the two revolutionary plans and their rejection, see del Valle, "Exposición," pp. 203–205, and "Reportaje," p. lv.

Foreign Minister Eduardo Costa remarked that Juárez Celman had never considered the possibility of an armed uprising.<sup>78</sup> The president did eventually admit the possibility, though too late to avoid it. From April onward, Juárez Celman received repeated warnings from Cabinet members, the vice-president, and the chief of police that a revolution was being plotted.<sup>79</sup> He remained unconvinced. It has been argued that Juárez Celman was badly advised by Roca, who had his own reasons for concealing from the president that a revolution was being plotted.<sup>80</sup> It seems more likely that Juárez Celman was reluctant to believe revolution possible; he was confident of the power of his political coalition and the support of the army, and underestimated the trouble that could be stirred up in the capital by a group of *porteño* politicians. It should also be remembered that there had not been a revolution in the country for ten years. Juárez Celman was not alone in believing that the era of political violence was over in Argentina. For example, in March 1890, *The Times*'s correspondent stated that violent uprisings were a thing of the past: "One good thing is that, though there is a general discontent, revolutions are not thought of, everybody being dead against our going back to old courses."<sup>81</sup> Juárez Celman's Minister of Education, Eduardo Wilde, when asked twenty days before the revolution whether he anticipated any political trouble, gave the official view:

I firmly believe that the era of civil wars has become a thing of the past in my country, and that there will be no disturbance of the public peace. Argentina has become convinced that nobody benefits by revolutions, and, besides, the government has ample power at its command to preserve and guarantee order.<sup>82</sup>

In mid-July, a leak finally convinced the president. In a Cabinet meeting on 17 July certain measures were decided; the following day General Campos was arrested and a number of army regiments believed to be involved in the plot were dispatched to the north of the country. With Campos's arrest, the revolution lost its military chief. However, it was

78 E. Costa to L. Domínguez, 8 August 1890, *PRO*, FO 6/412.

79 This was recorded by Cárcano in his memoirs and also by another contemporary *juarista*, Juan Balestra. See R.J. Cárcano, *Mis primeros ochenta años*, Buenos Aires, 1945, pp. 101 and 130; Balestra, *El Noventa*, p. 128.

80 Since early January Roca had received reports that a revolution was being plotted by the opposition. See B. Domínguez to Roca, 13 January 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 59. As we shall see below, the fact that Roca was aware of the revolutionary plans has given rise to a series of conspiratory theories on the causes of the military defeat of the rebels and of the political outcome of the revolt.

81 *The Times*, 31 March 1890. This view was also shared by Godfrey Bland, British Minister at Buenos Aires, who until the last minute thought that the rumors of the revolution were unfounded. Bland to Salisbury, 4 August 1890, *PRO*, FO 6/409.

82 *South American Journal*, 5 July 1890.

decided to go ahead with the plan.<sup>83</sup> Campos would be liberated on the morning of the revolution and could still take command. The day chosen was Saturday, 26 July.

The combat lasted four days. The rebels, around 300 civilians and 1,000 troops carrying red and green lights in order to recognize each other, congregated at 4 a.m. at the arsenal of the Parque de Artillería, in the Plaza Lavalle and in the large Municipality building. The square was guarded by artillery regiments. Krupp guns were stationed at each corner of the square, while the other regiments held the center and armed citizens defended the barracks. General Campos was liberated without much difficulty and, once in the Parque, directed events.<sup>84</sup> He departed from the original plan of immediately attacking the government and decided instead to let the loyal troops surround the Parque. The president was informed at 4 a.m. of the insurrection and went to the Retiro train station where the loyal army units and the police were gathering.<sup>85</sup> After a quick meeting with his Ministers it was decided that Minister of War General Levalle would command an attack on the rebels; Juárez Celman, to protect himself, would leave for Córdoba by train; Roca would take charge of the Government House; and Vice-President Pellegrini would assist General Levalle in the military action. The government began the attack on the rebels five hours later and the exchange of fire continued almost uninterrupted for the remainder of the day, stopping during the night, when only occasional shots were heard.<sup>86</sup> During this first day, the revolutionaries published a manifesto stating that, given current economic and political conditions, they felt obliged to rebel to "avoid the ruin of the country."<sup>87</sup> The government replied by announcing in *Sud-América* that a state of siege had been declared nationwide, and that army units in the provinces had been ordered to advance on the capital.

On Sunday, 27 July, combat began at first light, though dense fog made the engagement difficult and it quickly ended. Fierce fighting resumed at 9 a.m. An hour later, when government troops had suffered greater losses, the order was given to cease fire. General Campos had been informed that the revolutionaries had ammunition for only a further 50 minutes of fighting; the Revolutionary Junta therefore decided to propose an armistice, gaining time to search for ammunition under the pretext of burying the bodies. An armistice of twenty-four hours was agreed. During this time, some 300 dead and 600 wounded were collected by the ambulances of the

83 "Reportaje," p. lv; del Valle, "Exposición," pp. 207-208.

84 For details see del Valle, "Exposición," pp. 210-215; Balestra, *El Noventa*, pp. 154-155.

85 G. Langley, "Report of the Revolution at Buenos Aires," 4 August 1890, *PRO*, FO 6/409.

86 For the details of the battle, see *The Standard*, 3 August 1890; Langley "Report"; Balestra, *El Noventa*, pp. 153-178.

87 "Manifiesto," *Origen*, pp. 189-192.

Public Assistance, the tram companies, and the wagons of the Red Cross. The dead bodies were piled in the corners of the streets; General Levalle had given orders for a large number of coffins, but they were not delivered as the undertaker insisted on payment in cash.<sup>88</sup> On the government side the police suffered serious casualties; a combatant later recalled how three tram-cars full of policemen were attacked, the massacre being so great that even the horses were killed.<sup>89</sup>

Completely unaware that an armistice had been agreed, a rebel squadron of four gunboats followed their original instructions to bombard the city, continuing for several hours. They almost produced a serious international incident; the ministers of Britain, Spain, the United States, and Portugal claimed that "the bombardment of a defenceless town without due notice was contrary to the rules of civilized warfare," and they sent a delegate to one of the ships to ask to cease fire. The messenger was ignored and the foreign ministers began preparations to fire on the rebel squadron.<sup>90</sup>

In the meantime, the revolutionaries' search for ammunition had been unsuccessful and their situation grew desperate. Troops from the interior of the country started arriving in Buenos Aires during the evening. Some 2,000 men arrived from the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Córdoba, and Entre Ríos; in only two days, some 13,000 troops had been concentrated in Rosario and were ready to advance on the city of Buenos Aires.<sup>91</sup> This was done without difficulty. A contemporary British traveler later related that "there was no demonstration anywhere in these posts (Salta, Tucumán, Córdoba) in favour of the Unión Cívica, and everybody seemed to consider it perfectly natural that orders sent by the government should be strictly carried out."<sup>92</sup> The armistice was prolonged until Monday, 5 p.m. This favored the government, who knew of the rebels' lack of ammunition; meanwhile loyal troops continued to arrive to the city.<sup>93</sup> The final combat started on Monday evening, carrying on well into the night; the revolutionaries maintained a defensive posture. On Tuesday afternoon, the Revolutionary Junta surrendered. The government guaranteed amnesty for all rebels, including army members. The process of disarmament was carried out with considerable difficulty. Godfrey Bland, British representative in Buenos Aires, recalled how the capitulation left insurgent troops and civilians indignant: "many men wept with rage, uttering unprinciples [*sic*] on their leaders and accusing them of irresolution

88 *The Standard*, 3 August 1890.

89 Interview of Sixto N. Díaz to *El Mundo*, 26 July 1930.

90 Bland to Salisbury, 4 August 1890, PRO, FO 6/409.

91 Duncan, "Government by Audacity," p. 332.

92 *South American Journal*, 27 September 1890.

93 Bland to Salisbury, 4 August 1890, PRO, FO 6/409.



and even of treachery, one officer blowing his brains out in a fit of despair."<sup>94</sup> By 6 p.m., everything had finished and the loyalist troops advanced on the Parque.

Compared with the revolution of 1880, when some 20,000 men were thrown into battle and 2,000 killed or wounded, the revolution of 1890 was a relatively small affair. Some 5,000 to 6,000 people took part and between 800 and 1,000 were killed or wounded.<sup>95</sup> The government's casualties were suffered mainly by the police, who were shot down singly in the streets by UC men even during the armistice and after the defeat.<sup>96</sup> The contradictory accounts offered by contemporaries soon after these events make it hard to pinpoint the reason why the revolution failed. As we shall see, in spite of the military defeat of the revolution, Juárez Celman was forced to resign in early August. Many factions of the UC began to look toward their political futures through different eyes, opening up their internal differences, particularly between the *mitristas* and the other factions.<sup>97</sup>

The reason for the many different accounts of the revolution is simple: Each faction wanted to blame the other for the military defeat while claiming full responsibility for the subsequent political triumph.<sup>98</sup> What remains clear is that the whole affair was seriously mismanaged. Both civilian and military chiefs failed in their missions. Alem failed to imprison Juárez Celman and the others; Campos did not advance against the loyal troops. Conspiracy theories aside, it became clear in retrospect that the two major errors of the revolutionaries lay in attempting to defend the

94 Bland to Salisbury, 3 August 1890, *PRO*, FO 6/409.

95 There are no exhaustive casualty figures for the Revolution of 1890. Between 800 and 1,000 was estimated by G. Bland. Bland to Salisbury, 4 August 1890, *PRO*, FO 6/409, and by *The Times*, "The Annual Register," 1890.

96 Bland to Salisbury, 4 August 1890, *PRO*, FO 6/409.

97 Alem and Campos exchanged bitter attacks blaming each other for the defeat, see *MyD*, Vol. VII, pp. 97–105; "Reportaje"; *El Diario*, 6 September 1890; "Parte del General Campos," in Ladenberger, *Origen*, p. 234. In October 1890 Barroetaveña directed the publication of what was claimed to be the official story of the UC and the Revolution of 1890, called: J.W. Ladenberger and F.M. Conte, *Origen, Organización y Tendencias de la Unión Cívica*, Buenos Aires, 1890. In this publication, the *alemnista* faction of the party blamed the *mitristas* for the military defeat. This version was counteracted by José María Mendiá, *El secreto de la revolución: Lo que no se ha dicho*, Buenos Aires, 1892, a private secretary of General Campos who wrote in his defense. Soon after, two other contemporary observers published their accounts: Mariano de Vedia y Mitre defended the *mitrista* faction of the UC in his *La Revolución del 90*, Buenos Aires, 1891, while the *juarista* Juan Balestra in his *El Noventa* restrained from past judgment on the causes of the failure.

98 The tradition of searching for those responsible for the defeat was followed by later historians. See, for example: Sommi, *La Revolución*; Etchepareborda, *Tres Revoluciones*; Zorraquín Becú, *Cuatro Revoluciones*; Barreiro, "La causas determinantes"; Casablanca, "La traición a la Revolución del noventa," *Todo es Historia*, Año II, N. 17, 1968, p. 9; Herz, *La Revolución*, pp. 259–265.

Parque (rather than advancing) and failing to secure sufficient supplies of ammunition.<sup>99</sup>

In addition, the notion that civilians in Buenos Aires city would spontaneously rally to the movement once fighting broke out proved totally unfounded. The revolution was fought in a few blocks of the city surrounded by an apathetic population. The most active limited themselves to watching from street corners, balconies, or rooftops. The rebels had also assumed that, despite the haste with which the insurrection was launched after General Campos's arrest, they would have no difficulty carrying out their plan. They had also assumed that the government would offer little or no resistance.

A few days after the revolution's defeat, Juárez Celman was forced to resign. The outbreak of the revolution was a source of enormous embarrassment to the government. It demonstrated inadequate discipline in the army and exposed the president's failure of judgment regarding the opposition and its plans. Juárez Celman also committed a series of blunders once the revolution broke out. He left the capital on the first day of the revolution, leaving Roca, Pellegrini, and Levalle in charge. In so doing, he gave back to Roca and Pellegrini the power which he had contrived to remove from them.<sup>100</sup> After the revolution, Juárez Celman attempted to organize a new Cabinet. He turned first to Roca, who withheld his support and who later, with Pellegrini, asked the president to resign. Juárez Celman then tried the *mitristas*, hoping that a coalition with the opposition could save him. But after deliberations the *mitristas* rejected the offer. His final approach to Dardo Rocha met with similar results. In the meantime, Roca and Pellegrini had been holding secret meetings with members of the Congress and had begun to put pressure on Juárez Celman to tender his resignation. The president finally resigned on 6 August. Vice-President Pellegrini took over for the duration of the presidential term.<sup>101</sup>

The downfall of Juárez Celman in August 1890 put an end to the comfortable domination the PAN had exercised over the country's politics during the 1880s. It also ended a decade of rapid economic growth with

99 Roca had visited General Campos while he was imprisoned and this had led some to think that Roca and Campos had made a deal by which Campos would let the revolution be defeated and Roca guaranteed that Mitre would be the next president of the Republic. See Mendía, *El secreto*, pp. 6 and 36; Casablanca, "La traición," p. 9; Sommi, *La Revolución*, pp. 243-247; Etche-pareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 83-92; de Vedia y Mitre, *La revolución*, p. 156. No evidence has been found, however, to confirm this.

100 Duncan expands on this point in his "Government by Audacity," pp. 329-337.

101 The details of Juárez's resignation and his attempts to form a Cabinet can be found in Cárcano, *Mis primeros*, pp. 154-166. Cárcano wrote Juárez Celman's resignation. See also Balestra, *El Noventa*, pp. 209-234; Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 337-338.

record figures for immigration and investment. The economic and political panorama of most of the 1890s would be rather different. The country would not recover from the economic crisis until the end of the decade. On the political front, Juárez Celman's resignation converted the military defeat of the revolutionaries of 1890 into a political triumph, given that one of their main objectives had been achieved. The recently emerged opposition acquired a new prominence. Many groups in the interior joined the UC and, as we shall see, the new government of Pellegrini invited the *mitristas* to join the Cabinet. However, it soon became clear that the internal differences inside the UC were too deep to sustain unity. Some had joined the coalition with the sole intention of toppling Juárez Celman. Others had deeper objections to the political system of the 1880s and were not placated by the president's resignation. The result would be the fracture of the UC into the Unión Cívica Nacional (UCN) and the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) in 1891. Meanwhile, the internal division within the PAN between *juaristas* and *roquistas* did not immediately heal after the *jefe único* was gone. It would take Roca more than seven years to restore his leadership of the PAN and over the country in order to gain the presidency in 1898. The political scene of the 1890s became highly fragmented with the emergence of the UCN and the UCR and with the internal rivalries inside the PAN between *roquistas* and *juaristas* (soon known as *modernistas*). Unlike in the 1880s, when the politics of the country were practically reduced to the quarrels within the PAN, politics in the 1890s became a highly agitated affair.

## The Short-Lived Unión Cívica

The revolution of July 1890 and Juárez Celman's resignation initiated a period of uncertainty in Argentine politics. By August 1890, a decade of unchallenged domination by the PAN had ended; the political scene became fragmented and the set of rules which had governed politics in the preceding four years no longer applied. Historians have tended to oversimplify the political panorama of the post-Juárez Celman days. It has been erroneously assumed that the restoration of Roca's authority within the country immediately followed Juárez Celman's departure and that the emergence of the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) was, therefore, a reaction against an all-powerful PAN.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation has led to misunderstandings about the circumstance in which the UCR emerged, and about the nature of the party, its aims, and methods.

An alternative explanation of the events that took place between Juárez Celman's resignation (August 1890) and the election of Luis Sáenz Peña (April 1892) is offered in this chapter. The first section is devoted to the difficulties faced by the members of the Unión Cívica (UC) in their attempts to organize a political party during the months after Juárez Celman's departure. Originally organized as a temporary coalition, as a smokescreen for the planing of the revolution of 1890, the party had no solid foundations. Its internal conflicts, the fragmented political scene after Juárez Celman's downfall, and the uncertainty of the new situation made party organization a difficult task. The second section of this chapter deals

1 G. Del Mazo, *El Radicalismo: Ensayo sobre su historia y doctrina*, Buenos Aires, 1957, Vol. I, p. 66; D. Rock, *Politics in Argentina 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of the Radicalism*, Cambridge, 1975, p. 45; K. Remmer, *Party Competition in Argentina and Chile: Political Recruitment and Public Policy. 1890-1930*, Lincoln and London, 1984, p. 33; A. Ramos, *Revolución y contrarevolución en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1965 (third ed.), Vol. I, p. 380; A. Díaz de Molina, *La oligarquía argentina: Su filiación y su régimen (1848-1898)*, Buenos Aires, 1972, pp. 606-607; P.B. Luna, "El Radicalismo en las provincias: Su influencia en la cultura y solidaridad nacional," in *Revista Argentina de Ciencias Políticas*, Vol. X, 1916, pp. 389-390; H. Clemente, *El radicalismo: Trayectoria política*, Buenos Aires (second ed.), 1983, p. 11.



with the selection of the UC's candidates for the presidential election of 1892 and the organization of the UC following the political party model of the United States, assessing its impact in the country's politics. The final section of the chapter is devoted to the agreement between Roca and Mitre in which the UC and the PAN decided to form a coalition for the presidential election. This section details the negotiations surrounding this alliance, up to the presidential elections of April 1892. As we shall see, it was the agreement between Roca and Mitre that led to the formation of the Radical Party.

### Organizing a Political Party

"As you well know, the Unión Cívica was always an heterogeneous organization, united for combat, but pronged to split itself when it is time to construct,"<sup>2</sup> a UC member wrote to Mitre a month after Juárez Celman's resignation. Disputes arose within the UC as soon as the euphoria over the president's downfall had evaporated and the leading members of the party needed to agree on policy. The UC was originally a union of four political factions: the *mitristas*, the republicans, the *autonomistas*, and the Unión Católica.<sup>3</sup> Each had different party leaders, supporters, and platforms. Given that the UC had never been thought of as a permanent political party, some of its leaders even wondered whether it should continue to exist after the revolution.<sup>4</sup>

Three inextricable issues divided the party: different perspectives on the post-Juárez Celman political situation, the party's strategy in relation to the new government, and the organization of the UC at the local and national levels. The *mitrista* faction found the outcome of the revolution highly satisfactory.<sup>5</sup> Mitre had left for a year's trip to Europe in April 1890, but was kept regularly informed about events in Buenos Aires. One of his confidants reported to him on the feeling among the *mitrista* faction of the UC after the revolution: "Many of us, including General Campos, thought

2 J.A. García to Mitre, 11 September 1890, *Archivo Mitre*, A8C23C59N14094.

3 Added to these were those *juaristas*, such as Víctor Molina, who preferred to join the UC rather than accept Roca's leadership of the PAN. As we shall see, some *juarista* governors turned to the UC after Juárez Celman's resignation. On negotiations between *juaristas* and *cívicos*, see Mansilla to Roca 11 August 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 59.

4 Manuel Garro, president of the UC in Córdoba, explicitly told Manuel Estrada that the UC had since its origins been a coalition with the aim of toppling Juárez, but its members, who had banded together for this purpose alone, could now easily split from the coalition if they wanted to. J.M. Garro to J.M. Estrada, 30 December 1890, *Archivo Garro*.

5 *La Nación*, 2 September 1890. See also H.G. Herz, *La Revolución del 90*, Buenos Aires, 1991, pp. 256-257.

that this moral triumph was and is better for the country than a real victory of the revolution."<sup>6</sup>

After all, the gains to the rebels from a putative military victory would have been uncertain, whereas Juárez Celman had already been ousted and the UC, a minor *porteño* opposition group, now stood at the forefront of the political scene. Moreover, concrete benefits to the *mitristas* had already resulted from this newfound prominence. President Pellegrini had appointed three *mitristas* to his Cabinet: The Ministers of Foreign Relations and Education were, respectively, Eduardo Costa (Mitre's right-hand man) and Juan María Gutiérrez, while the Ministry of Finance went to Vicente F. López. Levalle remained at the Ministry of War, while Roca was appointed Minister of the Interior. Officially, this was not a coalition government. The appointments were one of the many conciliatory gestures taken by the new government toward the opposition.<sup>7</sup> It is noteworthy that posts in the new Cabinet were offered exclusively to the *mitrista* faction of the UC. "Even though I call myself *cívico*," Juan Cabardillo wrote to Mitre when he became Minister of Education, "everybody knows it is a *mitrista* who joins the government."<sup>8</sup>

The *mitristas* were willing to accept the overtures of the new government, but it soon became clear that the rest of the party was not. Aristóbulo del Valle represented another UC faction with a different reading of the post-revolutionary situation. He thought that the UC should maintain its opposition role. Del Valle agreed with the *mitristas* that another revolution was unthinkable, but opposition to the new government should, he felt, be firm. "The time for revolution is over," del Valle wrote to Miguel Cané, "but the revolution without arms will continue until the situation in the whole of the Republic gets regularized."<sup>9</sup> In his view, the UC should make the most of its popularity in the aftermath of Juárez Celman's resignation in order to become a well-organized political party and to compete against the PAN in the next presidential election.

A more extreme view was taken by Leandro Alem. He was still formally the president of the UC and had, after the revolution, won over the younger ranks of the party, becoming their unquestioned leader. Alem was

6 Belisario Roldán to Mitre, 21 September 1890, *Archivo Mitre*, AEC73C5N15225, and for Mitre's opinion of the post-revolutionary situation see Mitre to Roldán, 13 September 1890, reprinted in J.A. Noble, *Cien años, dos vidas: Leandro Alem y Lisandro de la Torre*, Buenos Aires (no date), p. 411.

7 Other conciliatory policies included an amnesty for the rebels and the banning of the corrupt electoral register and the preparation of a new one.

8 Cabardillo to Mitre, 27 October 1890, *Archivo Mitre*, A8C21C56N13666. Juan Cabardillo had replaced J.M. Gutiérrez in the Ministry of Education in October 1890.

9 A. del Valle to M. Cané, 20 August 1890, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 3, N. 2202.

deeply unsatisfied with the outcome of the revolution. Juárez Celman's downfall had turned a military defeat into a political victory, but this had not produced a UC government. On the contrary, the two men responsible for suppressing the revolution, Levalle and Roca, were now in power. To show his rejection of the new Cabinet, Alem wanted to plunge the UC National Committee into mourning by hanging black flags on its walls.<sup>10</sup> He was dissuaded from this, but made no bones about his opinion.

The dissension in the senior ranks of the UC found expression in contradictory attitudes toward the new administration. Alem and his followers began a bitter campaign against the government, organizing a series of public demonstrations.<sup>11</sup> In their public speeches they stated that the UC remained loyal to its original aims. This was not, they said, a time for conciliation: "This is time for supreme reaction . . . we are at the beginning of the road straight ahead and it is necessary to walk it all the way."<sup>12</sup> Nor did they exclude the use of violence.<sup>13</sup> The demonstrations of the *alem-nistas* and the content of their speeches were in marked contrast to the editorials published by the *mitrista* newspaper, *La Nación*, in favor of the new government.<sup>14</sup> Mitre, still in Europe, declared that the revolution had been merely a protest against the disorganization of the country's finances, that "it was a fait accompli, and the present Ministry was in every way a national one, possessing the support and confidence of the people."<sup>15</sup>

On 10 September 1890 Alem organized another public demonstration in the city of Buenos Aires against the government, this time demanding the resignation of Roca and Levalle. The government against which Alem demonstrated was partly composed of *mitristas* who were members of the UC, and, naturally, the demonstration exacerbated tensions between the two factions. Minister of Finance López reacted in a strongly worded letter to Alem, the message of which was in many ways prophetic:

I am informing you of the colossal task that I have over my shoulders and ask you to stop agitating the spirits, and to wait and be cautious. . . . With your intolerance you are promoting the rising of public opinion against the national government which is the backbone of the country's stability, the base of any possible salvation in this moment. . . . You

10 V.F. López to Alem, 8 September 1890, *Archivo Vicente F. López*, 21-1-16, Doc. 4320.

11 The demonstrations took place in Buenos Aires (10 August 1890), Rosario (24 August 1890), and again in Buenos Aires (2 September 1890).

12 Published letter of Alem to the Committee of the UC of Mendoza, 12 August 1890, reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VII, pp. 112; "Discurso de Alem en el mitín de Rosario," reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VII, p. 114.

13 See the public speeches of F. Barroetaaveña and J. Castellanos in the demonstration of 10 August 1890 reprinted in J. Ladenberger and F.M. Comte, *Orígenes, Organización y Tendencias de la Unión Cívica*, Buenos Aires, 1890, pp. 311 and 393.

14 *La Nación*, 2 September 1890. 15 *The Times*, 1 September 1890.

should restrain your impulsive nature. It is not in heated speeches and public disturbances where lies the basis of institutional reconstruction. Deceptive demagoguery only produces martyrs and, in this essentially conservative country, you are risking becoming one yourself. Do not be violent and convince yourself that when the government is in hands like the current ones, it is not prudent to agitate the people or to provoke divisions for trivialities. . . . If you persist in following your passions, assume that the road had split in two; you raked the one of the agitators and I will continue the one of order. And, given that you continuously invoke the public opinion, let's let it decide which one of us has chosen the best direction.<sup>16</sup>

Because Alem was still formally the president of the UC, the *mitristas* could not formally oppose the direction he was giving the party without risking a split. They therefore attempted to take over the UC's leadership. In September, when Alem had temporarily retired from the presidency because of ill-health, they sought to replace him by appointing a *mitrista* as party president. Alem was forced to rise from his sick bed to defend his post.<sup>17</sup>

The lack of cohesion among senior party members was also detrimental at provincial level. Shortly after Juárez Celman's resignation, UC groupings rapidly emerged in the provinces of Santiago, Catamarca, Tucumán, Jujuy, Santa Fe, Mendoza, Corrientes, and Córdoba. The situation varied from province to province. In some areas, like Tucumán and Córdoba, the branches were mainly composed of families or clans who had been deprived of political posts at the local or provincial level since the early 1880s. In Mendoza, for example, they were ex-members of the PAN who for one reason or another had defected. These provincial branches of the UC emerged with remarkable speed; they entered into negotiations with the *juarista* governors wherever possible (Córdoba, Tucumán, Mendoza, and Santiago) and challenged them where it was not (Jujuy).<sup>18</sup>

The situation was no better inside the PAN. Juárez Celman had resigned after a military triumph. In the interior, no governor had hesitated to obey his orders to send troops to the capital. After 6 August, Juárez Celman was no longer president, but his loyal governors were still in office. The *juaristas* were now on the defensive; they knew that if Roca or Pellegrini gained control of the party, their days in the political hierarchy were numbered. Many PAN factions in the provinces decided to support the emerging opposition rather than accept the restoration to the PAN

16 V.F. López to Alem, 8 September 1890, *Archivo V.F. López*, Leg. 21-1-16, Doc. 4320.

17 *Sud-América*, 25 September 1890.

18 For the case of Córdoba, see below; for Tucumán, see C. Terán to Roca, 25 August 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 59; for Mendoza, see Rufino Ortega to Roca, 28 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; for Santiago, see A. Rojas to Roca, 22 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; for Jujuy, see J.M. Prado to Roca, 31 August 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 59.



leadership of Roca and Pellegrini. With the exception of the small province of Catamarca, no governor had shown any sign of accepting Roca's leadership.

The case of Córdoba best illustrates the political atmosphere that followed Juárez Celman's resignation, and also the difficulties that the UC faced in organizing its ranks. The UC of Córdoba comprised two main factions: the Catholics, led by Juan Manuel Garro, President of Córdoba's UC; and the old *mitrista* party headed by Felipe Díaz.<sup>19</sup> There was considerable friction between these two wings of the UC; the Catholic faction strongly opposed Mitre's leadership at the national level and aligned itself with Alem, "the only liberal that in this country can be trusted."<sup>20</sup> The Catholics and Díaz found it very difficult to organize joint committees. Each faction conducted independent negotiations with the provincial government, and at the national level, negotiations concerning Córdoba took place between Garro, Alem, and Pellegrini on the one hand, and Felipe Díaz and Roca on the other.<sup>21</sup>

As early as August, Garro led a UC commission into negotiations with Eliseo Garzón, governor of Córdoba.<sup>22</sup> Garro demanded two ministries for the UC, which were refused.<sup>23</sup> At national level these negotiations were handled by Alem, representing Garro, and Pellegrini, representing the interests of the PAN.<sup>24</sup> Behind their backs, the *mitristas* had also tried to obtain benefits from Governor Garzón, who, however, was reluctant to share the government with the new opposition in the province.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, Roca commissioned Benjamín Domínguez to reorganize the PAN in Córdoba and to begin negotiations with Felipe Díaz for a reconciliation between *mitristas* and *roquistas*.<sup>26</sup> Domínguez, however, betrayed Roca and began his own negotiations with the *juaristas*.<sup>27</sup> Roca then estab-

19 Díaz was an old *mitrista* with family links with both Roca and Juárez Celman, who had initially supported Avellaneda in 1874 but had later competed against Juárez Celman for the governorship of Córdoba. Now he was back with the *mitristas*, but maintaining his links with Roca.

20 Estrada to Garro, 18 October 1890, *Archivo Garro*.

21 Gálvez to Roca, 21 August 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 59. For a different interpretation of these events, see S. Ratto de Sambucetti, "El Ministro Roca y la política Cordobesa," unpublished, 1989. R.A. Ferrero, "Origen y transformación del radicalismo en Córdoba," *Todo es Historia*, March 1976, N. 106, pp. 76-92.

22 L.J. Quinteros to Roca, 20 August 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 59. Garzón had become governor of Córdoba after Marcos Juárez's resignation on 19 August 1890.

23 Garro to Pellegrini, 4 September 1890, *Archivo Garro*; Díaz informed Roca about these negotiations, Díaz to Roca, 30 September 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60.

24 For the negotiations between Alem and Pellegrini, see Garro to Estrada, 18, 23, and 24 October 1890, *Archivo Garro*; B. Domínguez to Roca, 4 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60.

25 Domínguez to Roca, 28 August 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 59.

26 Díaz to Roca, 17 September 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60.

27 Domínguez to Roca, 7 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60.

lished direct negotiations with Felipe Díaz with the objective of organizing a new party in Córdoba that would embrace *mitristas*, *roquistas*, and, if possible, the Catholics.<sup>28</sup> If this succeeded, Díaz would be rewarded with the Ministry of Government in Garzón's administration. But President Pellegrini was simultaneously promising Alem that the Córdoba Catholic faction would gain a Ministry in Garzón's government.<sup>29</sup> With the support of Alem, the Catholics were threatening to organize a revolution against Garzón if these negotiations collapsed.<sup>30</sup> After a series of secret negotiations, misunderstandings, and betrayals, Díaz finally reconciled the *roquistas* and *mistristas* of Córdoba and thus obtained the ministry he had been promised. The Catholics admitted their defeat, remained in opposition, and in May 1891 launched a small revolution against the government that was promptly suffocated.<sup>31</sup>

Córdoba offers a paradigm of the fluidity of the post-Juárez Celman political scene. No party was now dominant, nor was the leadership of the PAN or the UC uncontested. The UC factions did not trust one another and competed for the direction of the party at local and national levels. Córdoba-style negotiations emphasized the rivalries within the UC which threatened to destroy the party.

Two other cases clearly illustrate the fragility of the UC: those of the provinces of Santiago del Estero and Buenos Aires. In early August 1890, the old *mitrista* party of Santiago del Estero began to reorganize under the banner of the UC.<sup>32</sup> Manuel Gorostiaga, one of its members, began negotiations with Absalón Rojas, an old friend of Roca, concerning the future government of the province.<sup>33</sup> Gorostiaga conducted these negotiations in the name of the UC, though only its *mitrista* faction was involved or stood to profit. In Buenos Aires, Bernardo de Irigoyen and Luis Sáenz Peña, both UC members with little sympathy for the *mitristas*, pulled family strings in the province and organized an independent party also under the UC banner.<sup>34</sup> Alem supported Irigoyen and Sáenz Peña and, as president of the UC, publicly denied Gorostiaga the authority to conduct negotiations in the name of the party.<sup>35</sup> The fact that Alem had acted without consulting the party's National Committee contributed to the bitterness of the *mitristas*.<sup>36</sup>

28 Díaz to Roca, 22 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60.

29 Garro to Pellegrini, 4 September 1890, *Archivo Garro*; B. Domínguez to Roca, 4 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60.

30 Estrada to Garro, 18 October 1890, *Archivo Garro*.

31 Estrada to Garro, 24 October 1890, *Archivo Garro*.

32 Vieyra to Roca, 12 August 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 59.

33 Rojas to Roca, 25 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60.

34 Rojas to Roca, 25 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60.

35 *Sud-América*, 21 November 1890.

36 See, for example, Vicente F. López's reaction in López to Alem, 8 September 1890, *Archivo V.F. López*, 21-1-19, Doc. 4320.

Events in the Province of Buenos Aires were stormier. Negotiations for the forthcoming provincial elections began in August. A faction of the UC represented by Bernardo de Irigoyen and the *juaristas* led by Roque Sáenz Peña agreed to mixed *juarista-cívico* lists. Under the same agreement, Luis Sáenz Peña, Roque's father, would become UC's president in the Province of Buenos Aires.<sup>37</sup> The *mitristas* had been excluded from these talks and any resulting benefits. Their only chance was to stop Luis Sáenz Peña from becoming president of the Province Committee. This election was to take place in a provincial Party Committee where the *mitristas* had a majority. Alem supported Irigoyen against the *mitristas*, and in a heated committee session, Alem threatened to resign from the party if Luis Sáenz Peña was not elected.<sup>38</sup> The *mitristas* backed down and let Luis Sáenz Peña become the president of the UC's branch in the province, but relations within the party were badly damaged.<sup>39</sup>

Thus the UC experienced immense difficulty in organizing a national political party after Juárez Celman's resignation. These difficulties arose from the nature of the coalition and were exacerbated by the political vacuum left by Juárez Celman. As divisions deepened the fiercest rivalries pitted the *mitristas* against the rest. The *mitristas* enjoyed certain advantages: They were the largest and best-organized faction in the UC, with wide and long-standing contacts in the provinces; in Bartolomé Mitre they had the most prominent leader; and they could rely on the support of their own newspaper, *La Nación*, one of the most influential dailies of the country. It was therefore predictable that they would attempt to take over the UC after the revolution. The remaining sectors of the UC fought back by undermining the *mitristas'* influence throughout the country.

In short, divisions within the UC, combined with the fragmented post-Juárez Celman political scene, threatened the UC's very existence. It was largely for this reason that Roca and Mitre agreed to run together in the following presidential election, thus setting the scene for the final split of the UC and the subsequent emergence of the Radical Party.

### Committees and Conventions

The political vacuum left by Juárez Celman awakened premature anxieties about the presidential elections of April 1892. Before the July revolution, Juárez Celman had chosen Ramón J. Cárcano as his successor, but now that the *jefe único* was gone the presidential chair could be contested. Previously, political parties had been organized around an undisputed leader who, in the run-up to an electoral contest, either launched his own candidacy or made the party's decision about which candidate to support. The UC,

37 Bernardo de Irigoyen to Roque Sáenz Peña, 10 August 1890, *Archivo Roque Sáenz Peña*, 22-2-14.

38 *Sud-América*, 22 October 1890. 39 *Sud-América*, 29 October 1890.

however, did not have a single leader, it had several. Bartolomé Mitre, Leandro Alem, Aristóbulo del Valle, and Bernardo de Irigoyen all had the credentials to become the party's candidate, although none of them was the "natural" party leader. On the contrary, the precarious balance of factions within the party meant that any attempt to impose one leader put the unity of the coalition at risk.<sup>40</sup>

The experience of the 1886 presidential election had taught the UC members valuable lessons. As we have seen, Partidos Unidos, the coalition put together for the presidential election of 1886, had contained all the factions now comprising the UC with the exception of the *alemnistas*. But it had had a short life-span and vanished after its electoral defeat. Each of the factions composing Partidos Unidos had maintained its own party structure, thus setting the scene for the Partidos Unidos' rapid dissolution.<sup>41</sup> If the UC sought to establish itself as a party and contest the presidential elections, a strong organization that melded the existing factions into a common party structure was required. The history of Partidos Unidos offered a further lesson regarding the selection of party candidates. In 1886, the leader of each faction had relinquished his own candidacy in favor of a colorless politician who could not threaten his pre-eminence, but who also failed to attract electoral support. The UC could not compete with the PAN unless it chose a strong candidate, and this meant the leader of one of the factions.<sup>42</sup> However, given the situation inside the party, the selection of such a candidate would put the UC's unity at risk. It was therefore decided that the UC should follow the U.S. model and select its presidential candidate at a party convention.<sup>43</sup>

40 Draft of a letter from Garro to Estrada, no date, *Archivo Garro*.

41 As it was pointed out by *La Unión*, 30 March and 4 April 1886.

42 As it was stated by Estrada in a letter to Garro, 16 December 1890, *Archivo Garro*.

43 Historians have invested considerable effort in attempting to clarify where the idea of organizing the UC according to the U.S. model of parties initially came from. Melo had suggested that the U.S. model was directly copied from Bryce's *The American Commonwealth*, following the suggestions of party members Virgilio Tedín and Nicolás Matienzo. Duncan has argued that the *cívicos* stole the project of a party convention from the *juaristas*, who had launched it in the days before the July revolution. Del Mazo and Etchepareborda attributed the idea to Hipólito Yrigoyen, who seemed to have suggested it after the July revolt. However, none of these accounts is convincing, nor are the efforts to link the idea of a party convention with a particular work or a particular member of the party altogether necessary. Bryce's work was published in 1888, and the ideas on party conventions in Argentina (and also in Chile) preceded that date. U.S. party organizations were previously known in Argentina through the translation of Story's *Comentario sobre la Constitución Americana*, a translation officially proposed and financed by the Argentine government in 1861. The *cívicos* could not have stolen the project from the *juaristas*, as they had announced their own party convention before the *juaristas* launched theirs (see *La Nación*, 17 July 1890). Finally, there is no evidence that Yrigoyen promoted the idea of a party convention; his performance inside the party was until then rather secondary. C. Melo, *Los Partidos Políticos Argentinos*, Buenos Aires, 1945, p. 29. Duncan, "Government by Audacity," p. 359; Del Mazo, *El radicalismo*, Vol. I, p. 71; R. Etchepareborda, *Tres Revoluciones*, Buenos Aires, 1970, p. 110.



The adoption of the U.S. model was also a response to the widely held belief that it was time to modernize Argentine political practices. After the July revolution, political procedures acquired a new importance. For a decade, the official PAN doctrine had reduced the "stuff of politics" to the accommodation of different interests and administrative procedure. Now debate on political parties and practices achieved unprecedented significance. Juárez Celman's political practices were blamed for the political and economic crisis, including the July revolt. The style of the "*unicato*," with its implication of direct and personal rule, had become as unpopular as Juárez Celman himself. Investing a political organization with permanent rules was one response to the perceived need for legitimate political methods and was expected to promote political stability in the country. The lack of organized political parties was blamed for Argentina's turbulent past, and it was hoped that the introduction of U.S. methods would result in governments of similar stability.<sup>44</sup>

Organizing the parties into committees and conventions was also intended to guarantee democratic procedures within political organizations, in order that "the opinion of all citizens could appropriately be consulted on the policies adopted by the party."<sup>45</sup> Only a decade before, the U.S. model had been rejected as "a boast of familiarity with alien political practices and a repudiation of ones own."<sup>46</sup> Now there was a general consensus, the PAN included, that the malpractices of the past should be abandoned – or at least should acquire a veneer of legitimacy.<sup>47</sup> This was tantamount to a wholesale rejection of *juarismo*.

The reorganization of the UC began in late September 1890. The selection of the party candidates was to begin with sectional or neighborhood conventions, moving through district and provincial conventions to a National Convention. The committees (national, provincial, district, and sectional) were to take on the day-to-day running of the party. A further innovation in Argentine politics was the introduction of the secret vote in party conventions.<sup>48</sup> Soon all political parties had adopted a similar structure; the PAN, the Unión Cívica Nacional, and the Socialist Party also created committees and conventions. The official rhetoric of each party emphasized similar ideas about formal written rules and democratic pro-

44 V. Gallo, "Partidos y Legisladores," *Revista de Derecho, Historia y Letras*, Año I, Vol. III, Buenos Aires, 1899, pp. 415–431.

45 *El Argentino*, 24 July 1895. For the set of ideas that surrounded the UC's adoption of a formal organization, see also Barroetaveña, "Carta Orgánica," p. 351, and "Convención Nacional," pp. 355–359, both in Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, pp. 355–359.

46 *El Nacional*, 1 February 1878.

47 See *Tribuna*, 4 November 1895.

48 See "Carta Orgánica de la Unión Cívica," in Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, pp. 345–349.

cedures for both day-to-day party management and for the selection of candidates.<sup>49</sup>

The introduction of these forms of party organization represented an innovation in Argentine political culture. Political parties had generally been created around strong personalities. This was the case, for example, of Mitre's Partido Liberal or Nacionalista, Alsina's Partido Autonomista, and Roca and Juárez Celman's PAN. Indeed, more than by their party labels, these organizations were known by the name of their leaders: *mitristas*, *alsinistas*, *roquistas*, *juaristas*, and so on. The authority of these leaders, their policy decisions, and their choice of candidates were rarely challenged by party members. This style of party organization (or lack thereof) was known as *personalismo*; it took little account of structures, manifestos, or doctrines. This does not mean that electoral campaigns, party manifestos, and a modicum of party organization did not exist before the 1890s. But before then party organization had been sporadic, inconsistent, and informal; leadership mattered more than anything else.<sup>50</sup>

The antecedent of the committee system introduced in the 1890s was the political club. Clubs emerged after the battle of Caseros (1853) to promote an interest in politics among the population. Whenever electoral contest was imminent, several political clubs emerged. These clubs ranked their candidates in party lists, published party manifestos, and organized political demonstrations.<sup>51</sup> The clubs disappeared after the election for which they had been created; at the next elections, new clubs would be formed with identical roles. The selection of candidates was a process in which few party members participated. In *La gran aldea*, Lucio V. López offered a valuable caricature of the way in which the lists of candidates were created. In a selective meeting, after declaring "we are the people," the members of the club would proceed to vote for each other, thus forming the party list. It was thought wholly unnecessary for the list to be approved

49 For the organization of the PAN, see *Tribuna*, 7 June, 13 August 1891, 13 January 1897. For the organization of the UCN, see *La Nación*, 14 January 1894.

50 For the organization of political parties before 1890, see E. Barba, *Los Autonomistas del 70: Auge y frustración de un movimiento provincial con vocación nacional*, Buenos Aires, 1976; C. Martínez, *Alsina y Alem: Portejinismo y milicias*, Buenos Aires, 1992, pp. 23-29, 79, 99; E. Luna, "Los hábitos políticos después de Caseros," *Todo es Historia*, Año XVII, N. 197, October 1983, pp. 22-24; T. Chianelli, *El gobierno del puerto: 1862-1968*, Buenos Aires, no date, pp. 45-47; G. Gasio and M.C. San Román, *La conquista del progreso 1874-1880*, Buenos Aires, pp. 191-194; for the organization of the Catholic Union, see N.T. Auza, *Corrientes sociales del catolicismo argentino*, Buenos Aires, 1984, p. 71. For the transition of party organization between the 1870s and the 1900s, see P. Alonso, "Voting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, before 1912," in E. Posada-Carbó (ed.), *Elections Before Democracy: The History of Elections in Latin America and Europe*, London, 1986, pp. 181-200.

51 Martínez, *Alsina y Alem*, pp. 24-38; H. Sabato, *La política en las calles: Entre el voto y la movilización, 1862-1880*, Buenos Aires, 1998, pp. 113-138.

by other party members or a wider audience.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the list would be proclaimed at a public meeting in one of the local theaters and published in the press.

The clubs came into their own on election day when militant club members were kept busy. Usual tricks such as changing the church clock to shorten the election day and frauds such as false electoral registers were combined with intimidation and violence.<sup>53</sup> Angel Carrasco recalls one of the elections he witnessed:

The ballot process was taking place with no disturbances when, in a given moment, something caught the attention of the president of the polling station . . . , and when the other members, holding guns under the table where the ballot was taken place were ready to attack him, they found themselves impotent to go ahead, except by risking their own lives. The president had foreseen the maneuver and disarmed them one by one.<sup>54</sup>

In the 1880s, there was a significant decline in party activities in Buenos Aires as a result of the PAN's predominance and the weakening of the *porteño* parties. Two developments occurred in this period. First, the term "club" was replaced by that of "committee," although the committees were identical with the clubs.<sup>55</sup> Second, in 1886, the PAN introduced a convention for the election of vice-president. This convention, however, did not much resemble the party conventions of the late 1890s; it was merely the scene of the proclamation of Pellegrini as the candidate for the vice-presidency as previously agreed by various provincial party committees.<sup>56</sup>

The introduction of the U.S. model in the 1890s thus implied two considerable innovations: one related to party structure, and the other to the procedures for the selection of candidates. The ephemeral clubs of the 1870s and 1880s gave way to more permanent party organization, in the form of committees whose functions went beyond electoral campaigns and militant support on election day. The parties promised to abandon *caudillismo* and introduced written regulations for the functioning of the committees.<sup>57</sup> The intention was to adopt a decentralized form of party organization and democratic procedures in the selection of party candidate, which would henceforth be elected from the bottom up. However,

52 Lucio V. López, *La gran aldea*, Buenos Aires, 1960, pp. 56–58.

53 For the fraudulent nature of elections in the 1860s and 1870s, see Hilda Sabato, "Citizenship, Political Participation and the Formation of the Public Sphere in Buenos Aires 1850s–1880s," *Past and Present*, August 1992, pp. 137–165; *La política en las calles*, pp. 77–138. A detailed analysis of elections can be found in Chapter 5.

54 A. Carrasco, *Lo que yo viví desde el 80 . . . Hombres y episodios de la transformación nacional*, Buenos Aires, 1947, p. 40.

55 For the organization of the PAN, see *Sud-América*, 15 July, 25 September, 1 October 1889.

56 *La Tribuna Nacional*, 2–4 April 1886. 57 *La Prensa*, 6 June and 12 August 1895.

as might be expected, old habits died hard, and for many years old habits and new rules cohabited. The party committees of the 1890s retained many of the characteristics of the old clubs. Electoral fraud did not disappear and the committees performed roles similar to those of club members on election days. For many years, conventions served only to rubber-stamp candidacies agreed and even proclaimed before the Party Convention took place. The UC committees founded in Buenos Aires city in 1889 also had a more clandestine function. Angel Gallardo, then a university student and a party member, recalled in his memoirs how the committees were used to plot the July revolt of that year.<sup>58</sup> The Radicals integrated this conspiratorial aspect into their party organization, plotting a series of revolts throughout 1892 and 1893.

Hence, internal decentralized party democracy was not achieved overnight simply by the introduction of the U.S. model of party organization. Nevertheless, the internal organization of the parties of the 1890s added a new dynamic to the formulation of party policies and in the selection of candidates.<sup>59</sup> During the 1870s, the formation of alliances and the launching of presidential candidacies were decided by the individual criteria of the party leader and his intimate circle. From the 1890s, such decisions, in theory, had to be discussed and ratified by party conventions and by the party's national committees. This meant that alliances and candidacies could no longer be expected to be made or broken, supported or withdrawn, at the sole discretion of the personal will of the party leader without risking revolt from other party members.

By the end of 1890, the UC called for a National Party Convention scheduled for 15 January 1891 in Rosario, Province of Santa Fe, to select the party's candidates for the presidential elections of April 1892. Siting the convention in Rosario rather than Buenos Aires was meant to serve two purposes: to mollify the provincial branches of the UC, for whom a convention in Buenos Aires might have seemed an imposition from a party whose main leaders were *porteños*, and to remove the selection of the party candidates from Mitre's stronghold.<sup>60</sup> Given the delicate situation within the UC, the lack of consensus about candidates before the convention was predictable. As a contemporary observer remarked, the election of party candidates became "the bone of contention."<sup>61</sup> The *mitristas* of course sup-

58 A. Gallardo, *Memorias para mis hijos y nietos*, Buenos Aires, 1982, p. 59.

59 This was particularly the case of the UC and, later on, of the UCR and the UCN. The PAN was the only party of the 1890s that had no permanent party structure. Its committees were generally organized before the elections and were disbanded after election day.

60 Draft of a letter from Garro to Estrada, no date, *Archivo Garro*. Torrent to Mitre, 5 May 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, AEC77C20N15631.

61 Roldán to Mitre, 21 October 1890, *Archivo Mitre*, AEC73C5N15224.



ported Mitre, who was still in Europe waiting for the political panorama to clear. But Mitre was strongly opposed by the Catholic factions for whom Mitre "belongs to the perverse sects that beat the Church."<sup>62</sup> The Catholics from the interior also resented Mitre's *porteñismo*; though he was one of the country's most prestigious politicians, Mitre had never enjoyed much support in the provinces.<sup>63</sup> The Catholics backed Luis Sáenz Peña, but he too lacked the support of other factions.<sup>64</sup> The *alemnistas* proposed the candidacy of Aristóbulo del Valle, who also counted with the support of Bernardo de Irigoyen when the latter realized that he lacked support for his own candidacy.<sup>65</sup>

While the National Convention was scheduled for January, in December the *mitristas* prematurely launched the candidacy of Mitre in the provinces.<sup>66</sup> Del Valle responded by withdrawing in favor of Mitre in order to strengthen and unify the UC,<sup>67</sup> but he failed to convince the other factions to do the same: Irigoyen and the Catholics still opposed Mitre.<sup>68</sup> The convention, attended by 111 party members, took place on 15 January in Rosario in a tense atmosphere. By then it was known that Mitre could count on enough votes to win his candidacy comfortably. The only candidacy left to be decided was for the vice-presidency. After a long inaugural speech from Alem, still UC's president, Mitre and Bernardo de Irigoyen were elected as candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency with 105 and 97 votes, respectively.<sup>69</sup> The convention vote created a certain balance among the factions. Mitre and Irigoyen themselves belonged to different political traditions and had recently espoused contrasting opinions on the political situation. In 1886 Mitre had vetoed Irigoyen's presidential candidacy; Irigoyen's anti-*mitrismo* was well known. Mitre favored a conciliatory policy with the PAN; Irigoyen opposed this.<sup>70</sup> The outcome of the

62 E. Garzón to Roca, Córdoba, 8 January 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 62.

63 Draft of a letter from Garro to Estrada, no date; and Garro to Estrada, 30 December 1890, *Archivo Garro*. For Mitre's failure in expanding his *porteño* base to the rest of the country, see T. Halperín Donghi, "Una nación para el desierto Argentino," in *Proyecto y construcción de una nación (Argentina 1846-1880)*, Caracas, 1990, pp. liii-lx.

64 Estrada to Garro, 23 December 1890, *Archivo Garro*.

65 Roldán to Mitre, 21 October 1890, *Archivo Mitre*, AEC73C5N15224. A potential candidacy of Irigoyen was firmly opposed by the Catholics, who resented Irigoyen's religious indifference. See Estrada to Garro, 16 December 1890, *Archivo Garro*. Irigoyen had met the same firm opposition from the Unión Católica in 1886. Estrada to Garro, 29 September and 21 October 1885, *Archivo Garro*.

66 The candidacy of Mitre was prematurely launched in Salta, Tucumán, and Santiago. *El Diario*, 12 December 1890.

67 Estrada to Garro, 16 December 1890, *Archivo Garro*. 68 Ibid.

69 For details of the Convention, see *El Diario*, 15 and 17 January 1891.

70 For Irigoyen's opinions on the post-*juarista* political situation, see "Carta política del D. Bernardo de Irigoyen al Doctor Domingo Guemes, Presidente de la Unión Cívica de Salta," reprinted in Ladenberger, *Orígenes*, pp. 361-363.

convention, therefore, was a compromise between the two main rival factions inside the UC. Alem, who represented the radical wing of the party, the group that most strongly opposed the PAN and was ready to use any means to combat it, was still president of the National Committee which was in charge of party policy. Only the Catholic faction of the UC was poorly represented by the presidential ticket agreed at the convention, and some of its members abandoned the party. Events were, however, soon to reveal that the balance achieved by the Mitre-Irigoyen formula was not a lasting one.

### The Agreement

In January 1891 the UC's National Convention confirmed Bartolomé Mitre as the party's presidential candidate. However, Mitre was at the time considering other options. He had left for Europe in April 1890, leaving the July revolution in the hands of Alem and Campos, had remained there when proclaimed the UC presidential candidate, and returned to Buenos Aires only on 18 March 1891. Two days after his arrival, Mitre and Roca publicly announced that they had reached an agreement by which the PAN and the UC would run together in the forthcoming presidential elections.<sup>71</sup> The leaders of the two parties would choose the candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency, thus avoiding electoral competition. No names had yet been put forward.

The agreement was publicly sealed on 20 March, but it was the result of long months of intense political maneuvering. From September 1890 onward, Roca had been instructing his loyalists in the provinces to negotiate local coalitions with the newly emerged UC units and share with them available political and administrative posts.<sup>72</sup> At that stage, no word on possible presidential candidates accompanied the instructions, although rumors of a possible Mitre-Roca ticket soon emerged.<sup>73</sup>

Mitre's decision to negotiate with the PAN was understandable. He was

71 For a detailed account of this agreement, see Allende, "Mitre, Roca," p. 220; Etchepareborda, *Tres Revoluciones*, pp. 107-133; Bianco, *La Doctrina Radical*, pp. 24-32; M. Bosch, *Historia del Partido Radical: La UCR 1891-1930*, Buenos Aires, 1931, pp. 17-22.

72 For instructions to Córdoba, see L.J. Quinteros to Roca, 20 August 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; to Santiago: Absalón Rojas to Roca, 13, 22, 25 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; to Corrientes: Solari to Roca, 24 October, 20 November 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; to Santa Fe: N. Oroño to Roca, 22 November 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61; to Mendoza: Guíñazú to Roca 19 August 1890, R. Ortega to Roca, 30 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; to Catamarca: Arturo del Pino to Roca, 11 November 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; to La Rioja: F.J. Bustos to Roca, 13 November 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61; to Salta: Manuel Sánchez to Roca, 29 November 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61.

73 Angel Quiróz to Roca, 14 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61, and J. Santillán to Roca, 10 December 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61.

the candidate of a political organization whose unity had always been fragile and his candidacy had succeeded only against strong internal resistance. Mitre doubted whether the UC could successfully compete against the PAN or, indeed, act as a party of government. "It will be difficult," he confessed to Irigoyen, "to maintain . . . cohesion with a fixed course that can lead us toward a definitive solution, first on the electoral front and later once in government."<sup>74</sup>

The initiative for a coalition between the UC and the PAN had come from Roca. He had always preferred cooperation to competition. But now he also had other motives. In spite of Juárez Celman's resignation and his own appointment as Minister of Interior, Roca had been unable to reestablish his authority within either the PAN or the country. On his appointment, he found himself in a difficult political situation. As a friend reported to Mitre, "for the opposition Roca represents the bad enemy and for those in government he is the destroyer of the system that allowed them to enjoy the money from the official banks and to carry on all sorts of businesses."<sup>75</sup> Juárez Celman was out of action, but his loyal governors remained in their posts and showed no signs of accepting Roca's restoration as the new leader of the PAN. On the contrary, prominent *juarista* governors such as Racedo in Entre Ríos, Bores in Tucumán, Guíñazú in Mendoza, Ruíz in Corrientes, the Iriondista faction in Santa Fe, and the governor of La Rioja, preferred to join the UC rather than become *roquistas*.<sup>76</sup> Roca did not have sufficient forces of his own to counterbalance the *juarista* faction of the PAN. By November 1890, he could count on the support only of Santiago del Estero, the partial support of Córdoba, and on a few *roquista* factions spread around the country. He could not expect to control the electoral college for the 1892 presidential elections. Rapid action was required and Roca's celebrated foresight came into play: He sought to make a coalition with the *mitristas*.

Roca's political weakness in the post-Juárez Celman days was, then, one decisive factor in his decision to form an electoral coalition with the UC. A second was the severe financial straits in which Argentina found itself. On 12 July 1890, *The Economist* announced to the world that "the long anticipated collapse at the River Plate has at last taken place."<sup>77</sup> The article included firm advice from the British Minister in Buenos Aires against emigration to Argentina. When Pellegrini took over the presidency in August 1890, the country was in financial disarray. Hence the appoint-

74 Mitre to B. Irigoyen, 6 June 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, A8C11C35N12028, reprinted in *La Biblioteca*, Buenos Aires, Año 1, Vol. II, 1896, p. 615. A similar line of thought in justifying the alliance was later published by La Nación, *Anuario de la Nación*, Buenos Aires, 1891, pp. 6-7.

75 A. Obligado to Mitre, 31 December 1890, *Archivo Mitre*, AEC68C19N14841.

76 Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 362-363. 77 *The Economist*, 12 July 1890.

ment of Vicente F. López as finance minister. López was seventy years of age, a practicing lawyer, a renowned historian, and the rector of the National University of Buenos Aires. That he had also joined the UC and participated in the July revolution was now of no significance. The important thing was that López was known to international business circles as a man whose "sound financial views and high integrity are guarantees that no measures of doubtful character will be recommended to cure the existing evils and that the true interest of the nation will be honestly studied."<sup>78</sup>

López faced a formidable task. He opened the account books to find that the Banco Nacional held liquid assets of 450,000 (gold) and faced an immediate liability of 7.3 million (gold) and 410,000 (paper). The municipality of Buenos Aires went into bankruptcy and was soon followed by the Banco Hipotecario Nacional. Most of the gold reserves backing the notes of the Guarantee Banks had been exhausted.<sup>79</sup> The total (interior and foreign) Argentine debt, including that of the provinces, had risen from \$141,717,849 to \$574,068,446 in three years.<sup>80</sup> This debt could not be honored. López presented an emergency plan to Congress and began negotiations for a new international loan.<sup>81</sup> Barings's headquarters in Buenos Aires sent the following cable to London:

Financial affairs critical in a panic. Minister of Finance request us to inform you it is of most importance loan should be arranged with no delay in order to avoid bankruptcy if conditions are not such the Argentine government can honourably accept Minister of Finance and Cabinet will resign this would be fatal as will probably result in anarchy.<sup>82</sup>

In November, Barings announced its insolvency. An Argentine committee, presided over by Lord Rothschild and composed of the English, French, and German creditors, was quickly organized to draw up a financial reconstruction plan for the Argentine Republic.<sup>83</sup> President Pellegrini made no effort to hide his despair: "We are in great danger of disappearing as a civilized nation," he announced to the country, "and falling back to the merely 'South American.'"<sup>84</sup> It was also his firm view that the financial crisis made political reconciliation imperative to guarantee peaceful

78 Samuel B. Hale to London, 20 August 1890, *Baring Brothers*, H.C. 4.1.99.

79 Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 348-349.

80 *USA Monthly Consular Reports* (January-April 1890), Washington 1891, p. 630.

81 *The Economist*, 22 November 1890.

82 Draft, no names, 20 November 1890, *Baring Brothers*, H.C. 4.1.99.

83 For the negotiations of the Argentine Committee, see *The Economist*, 29 November, 6, 13, and 20 December 1890.

84 Interview with Pellegrini in *La Nación*, reprinted in *USA Monthly Consular Reports* (January-April 1891), p. 84.



presidential elections.<sup>85</sup> Roca shared this view and initiated a political discourse corresponding in its objectives to the clandestine negotiations he was conducting with the *mitristas*:

Factions are a threat to the people and to the government. We should all learn from the lessons of the past and find inspiration in the example given today by the national government, which is surrounded by men of worth and reputation, independent of their previous political preferences. This has been my totally impersonal advice. I have supported no one and recommended no one, and I have only expressed ideas of conciliation reminding everybody that it is easy to engage in this current of thought and that there is no possible solution outside of it.<sup>86</sup>

Difficulties in pulling the PAN together, the reluctance of the *juaristas* to accept Roca's leadership of the party, the rapid growth of UC factions throughout the country, the financial crisis, and the concomitant need to construct an image of stability for Argentina's European creditors – all these influences combined to tempt Roca toward coalition with the UC. Roca negotiated with the *mitrista* faction of the UC; they were the most moderate faction of the party and had already responded to the government's overtures by accepting places in the Cabinet. Roca's initiatives gained Mitre's approval.<sup>87</sup> It was to be expected that Alem and his followers would oppose reconciliation, but they were only a minority in the UC. For a while, it was unclear how other important leaders, such as Bernardo de Irigoyen and Aristóbulo del Valle, would react in relation to a deal with the PAN.

The instructions to reach local agreements between *roquistas* and *mitristas* were received in the provinces with mixed response.<sup>88</sup> As the governor of Santiago del Estero reminded Roca, "it should not be forgotten that it is easy for two leaders to get together and set an agreement, but it is difficult to convince their respective forces which have been antagonistic all their lives."<sup>89</sup> Negotiations were conducted in a climate of national tension. Roca received regular warnings from Formosa, Córdoba, Corrientes, and Tucumán of revolutions being organized by the *cívicos*; the gov-

85 See Pellegrini's message to Congress on 17 December 1890, in C. Pellegrini, *Obras*, Buenos Aires, 1941, Vol. V, pp. 135–137.

86 Interview of Roca in *La Nación*, 16 September 1890, reprinted in Julio A. Roca, "Declaraciones Políticas," *Revista de Derecho Historia y Letras*, Buenos Aires 1902, Año V, Vol. XIV, pp. 174–175.

87 Mitre to Roldán, 13 September 1890, reprinted in Noble, *Cien años*, pp. 411–412.

88 For negotiations in Catamarca, see A. del Pino to Roca, 11 November 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; in Corrientes: J. Solari to Roca, 24 October and 20 November 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; in Salta: M. Sánchez to Roca, 29 November 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61; in Santa Fé: N. Oroño to Roca, 22 November 1890, and J. Gálvez to Roca, 5 December 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61.

89 Absalón Rojas to Roca, 22 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60.

ernors of these provinces demanded weapons.<sup>90</sup> The *roquistas* from Córdoba reported a violent confrontation:

The Civic Union went out yesterday in a demonstration, walked in front of the [PAN's] Club, shouted down the thieves, Club members threw stones, the demonstrators replied with gun shots, the Club responded with assaults, fires, murders resulting from guns and knives, dead people on the streets (others seem to have been hidden), 15 dangerously wounded besides those with minor injuries; the rumors are diverse, men from the Unión Cívica dead and gravely wounded; a house burnt down and the Partido Nacional defeated; each one complains of having been attacked by the other, everybody is angry with [police chief] Astrada.<sup>91</sup>

In other areas, the demands put forward by the *mistristas* made it difficult to reach an agreement. Cafferata, in Santa Fe, found the bargaining particularly arduous:

The demands made an agreement impossible. [The *nitristas*] wanted current Minister Leiva out, all the ministries, two-thirds of the legislature, the office of Political Chief in Rosario, the Police Chief of the Capital and of four heads of departments, that is, six out of the total of nine departments in which the province is divided.<sup>92</sup>

Throughout February, open talk of revolution in the provinces intensified. The atmosphere was highly charged. "Anything is better than the cloud of anxiety, suspicion and discomfort under which the inhabitants of Buenos Aires have at present the misfortune to dwell," the British representative reported to London.<sup>93</sup> On 14 February, an attempt was made to assassinate Roca in the street. The incident was linked to anarchist organizations, but proved to be the isolated initiative of a fourteen-year-old boy. However, the tension in the country was such that President Pellegrini declared a state of siege and banned the most recalcitrant of the UC newspapers, *El Argentino* and *La Defensa del Pueblo*.

Roca's followers were not alone in finding it difficult to reach agreement with the opposition. Inside the UC, the deal also met with mixed responses. When rumors about a Mitre-Roca agreement reached the public in January 1891, soon after Mitre's presidential candidacy was confirmed by the UC Party Convention, Alem and his circle started a campaign to boycott the deal through *El Argentino*, the UC's official newspaper.

90 I. Fotheringham to Roca, 21 September 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; Garzón to Roca, 22 September 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60; Ruíz to Roca, 5 December 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61; Santillán to Roca, 10 December 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61.

91 B. Domínguez to Roca, 27 October 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 60.

92 J.M. Cafferata to Roca, 28 November 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61. In both Santa Fe and Santiago deals with the UC were finally settled in December, see: J. Gálvez to Roca, 5 December 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61; Rojas to Roca, 21 November 1890, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 61.

93 Pakenham to Salisbury, 17 February 1891, PRO, FO 118/219.

The daily had been founded in July 1890, before the revolution, had been closed down by the government soon after, and was back in the streets in February. Even though it was the official newspaper of the UC, its editorial and staff was *alemnista*. *La Defensa del Pueblo*, another daily that responded to the UC, also joined *El Argentino* in a bitter campaign against the government and anticipated the rejection of any agreement between Roca and Mitre.<sup>94</sup> After Mitre's return from Europe, when the agreement was confirmed, relations between Mitre and Alem deteriorated. That General Campos, president of the UC of the Province of Buenos Aires, had formed a local coalition with the PAN without consulting Alem, who was still the UC president, did not help.<sup>95</sup> On 17 May, in a forceful letter to Mitre, Alem made his decision on the agreement clear: "I am definitely against the agreement and I am decided firmly to sustain the solemn compromises and the manifesto that the Unión Cívica declared before the country."<sup>96</sup>

Mitre replied that, whatever Alem's decision, he stood by his own.<sup>97</sup> The breach between the two leaders was definitive. This did not, however, mark the split in the UC. Alem was not alone in his dissatisfaction with the agreement, but the dissidents were still a minority. Bernardo de Irigoyen initially supported the alliance with the PAN, and Mitre did everything possible to keep him on his side.<sup>98</sup> He had foreseen that Alem and his followers would resist the agreement, but he could not afford to lose Irigoyen's support as he had strong connections in the provinces, and Mitre needed to maximize the UC's unity in order to conserve a strong bargaining position vis-à-vis Roca.<sup>99</sup> The agreement guaranteed Mitre the presidential candidacy, and he was willing to offer Irigoyen the vice-presidency, though he was afraid that Roca would demand the post for the PAN.<sup>100</sup>

94 See, for example, *La Defensa del Pueblo*, 6, 10, 16, and 19 February 1891.

95 General Campos had been elected in February president of the party in the Province of Buenos Aires, after Luis Sáenz Peña's resignation in December 1890. For the unfavorable effect that the coalition with the PAN in the Province of Buenos Aires had on the relations between Mitre and Alem, see Alem to Mitre, 7 May 1891, Mitre to Alem, 17 May 1891, and Alem to Mitre, 20 May 1891, in *Archivo Mitre*, A5C25C108; A5C25C109 and A5C25C111, respectively, and reprinted in B. Mitre, *Correspondencia literaria, histórica y política*, Buenos Aires, 1972, pp. 127–267.

96 Alem to Mitre, 17 May 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, A5C25C112, reprinted in Mitre, *Correspondencia*, p. 263.

97 Mitre to Alem, 20 May 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, A5C25C113, reprinted in Mitre, *Correspondencia*, pp. 264–267.

98 Irigoyen to Mitre, 23 March 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, A8C11C35N12015.

99 For the foreseen resistance to the agreement, see Roldán to Mitre, 2 February 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, AEC73C5N15232. For Mitre's views on Irigoyen, see the letter marked as confidential from Mitre to Próspero García, 14 May 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, A8C6C18N11400.

100 Ibid.

In the first days of June, a commission formed by six members of the UC (three in favor of the agreement and three against it), studied the alliance with Roca. After deliberations, it was resolved that the matter should be placed in the hands of a National Party Convention, scheduled for 29 June. Mitre was ready to ignore the convention if it voted against the agreement, but preferred to maintain a united front.<sup>101</sup> However, as the day of the convention approached, opposition to the deal mounted in the UC. Mitre had not succeeded in securing the vice-presidency for Irigoyen, who now turned against the agreement. On 27 June 1891, knowing they would not win over the party convention, the *mitristas* decided to split from the party before the convention was due to take place.<sup>102</sup> The UC became definitively divided into *acuerdistas* (in favor of the agreement) and *anti-acuerdistas* (against the agreement), soon to be known, respectively, as the Unión Cívica Nacional, led by Mitre, and the Unión Cívica Radical, led by Alem and Irigoyen.<sup>103</sup>

While the UC paid for the agreement with Roca by schism, the PAN was also finding difficulties in implementing it. Initially, the idea of an alliance with the UC had been well received in Salta, San Luis, Santiago del Estero, San Juan, and Tucumán.<sup>104</sup> However, it soon became apparent that "the fox (Roca) [had] counted his chickens before he had them in his grasp."<sup>105</sup> Difficulties in reaching local agreements were soon reported in most provinces, where governors belonging to the PAN refused to share power with the opposition. By June, the agreement had collapsed in Tucumán, Santa Fe, Mendoza, and Catamarca.<sup>106</sup> It also encountered strong resistance in the army. After all, the July revolution had pitted *mitrista* against *roquista* officers and soldiers and now reconciliation was proving difficult.<sup>107</sup> The

101 Mitre to García, 22 June 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, A8C6C18N11403.

102 For these events, see Mitre to J.M. Gorostiaga, 7 June 1891, *Archivo Biblioteca Nacional*, Leg. 706, N. 13908.

103 See the chronology of political parties and factions of these years in Appendix 1.

104 For Salta, see D. Leguizamón to Roca, 22 April 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 63; for San Luis, see M. Avellaneda to Roca, 15 April 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 63; for Santiago del Estero, see M. Ruíz to Roca, 15 April 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 63; for San Juan, see C. Doncel to Mitre, 10 April 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, A8C23C59N14105; and for Tucumán, see E. Paz to Roca, 18 April 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 63.

105 *South American Journal*, 20 June 1891.

106 García to Mitre, 17 June 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, A8C23C59N14105A; Gonzáles to Roca, 5 June 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 64; Pedro Funes to Roca, 27 May 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 64; Guinazú to Roca, 18 May 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 64.

107 For the army's dissatisfaction with the *acuerdo*, see J. Ramón Vidal to Antonio Ruíz, 23 March 1891, *Archivo Roca* Leg. 63; *South American Journal*, 16 May 1891; *The Times*, 21 February 1891; *Weekly Herald*, 28 February 1891, reprinted in PRO, FO 6/421; *Military Manifesto*, 27 February 1891, reprinted in PRO, FO 6/421.



negotiations for the implementation of the agreement between Roca and Mitre had taken place at a time when the country had entered into a financial panic. In June, there was a run on the banks, and some were forced to close their doors; these included the Banco Hipotecario Nacional, previously Argentina's strongest bank.<sup>108</sup> Rumors of revolution mounted, keeping the government in a constant state of alert.<sup>109</sup> Finally, on 15 October, in the face of growing opposition to the agreement in the UC, the PAN, and the army, Mitre publicly withdrew his candidacy.<sup>110</sup> Roca immediately followed suit, announcing his retirement from public life.<sup>111</sup> The alliance had collapsed.

However, two months later, Roca and Mitre were forced to change their minds. The *juarista* faction of the PAN, now calling themselves *modernistas*, had launched, on 18 December, the ticket Roque Sáenz Peña–Manuel Pizarro for the next presidential elections.<sup>112</sup> Formally, the *modernistas* still belonged to the PAN, but it grouped together those who were not ready to accept Roca's leadership within the PAN nor to let him control the destiny of the next presidential election. Active members of the *modernista* faction included Paul Groussac, Roque Sáenz Peña, Miguel Cané, and the *ex-mitrista* Lucio V. López. They had quietly been conducting negotiations throughout the country since the beginning of the year, and by December, they counted the support of the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Entre Ríos, Corrientes, Córdoba, Santiago del Estero, Catamarca, Jujuy, and Salta: This constituted a majority in the electoral college.<sup>113</sup>

Mitre and Roca reacted promptly by restoring their electoral deal, but they could not muster together sufficient political influence to halt the *modernistas*, who could rely on a majority in the electoral college to elect the presidential candidate of their choice. The Radicals were invited to reconsider and join an organized front against the old enemy; they refused, stating that "in the supreme time of the struggle we are still firmly supporting our program."<sup>114</sup> Only two months from election day, Roca and Mitre played a last, desperate card by offering Luis Sáenz Peña, the *modernista* candidate's father, the presidential candidacy of a new agreement

108 *The Times*, 4 June 1891. For the announcement of the Banco Hipotecario Nacional, see "Confessions of Governor Costa," in *Buenos Ayres Standard*, 5 May 1891, CFB, 969882/62.

109 These rumors came from Corrientes, Córdoba, and Tucumán. See J. Solari to Roca, 23 July 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 64; E. Garzón to Roca, 23 July 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 64.

110 For Mitre's letter of resignation, see *El Argentino*, 16 October 1891.

111 *La Prensa*, 17 October 1891. For Roca's manifesto of retirement, see *South American Journal*, 21 November 1891.

112 Manuel Pizarro was the current governor of Córdoba.

113 For the early negotiations, see *El Diario*, 21 January 1891; *La Prensa*, 1 January 1892. For a characterization of the *modernistas*, see Etcheparebora, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 140–144; Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 382–397; Gallo, "Un quinquenio," pp. 222–225.

114 Alem to Garro, 9 December 1891, *Archivo Garro*.

between *roquistas* and *mitristas*. The father accepted, the son withdrew.<sup>115</sup> The *modernistas*' challenge had been cut short. His son's compliance and the finesse of Roca allowed Luis Sáenz Peña to be elected president of Argentina in April 1892.<sup>116</sup>

The Radical Party emerged in 1891 after complex negotiations between the different political factions and parties in the highly fragmented political scenario that followed the July revolution. Until now, historians have related these events in the following way: First, that the ultimate beneficiary of the July Revolution was Roca, who returned to the House of Government as minister of interior; second, that Roca's control over the provinces was established immediately after the revolution; third, that Roca, from a powerful bargaining position, offered Mitre a deal in order to weaken the UC; fourth, that the Radicals which split from the UC represented the majority of the original coalition. However, as we have seen, the circumstances surrounding the emergence of the UCR were rather different. Roca was not the ultimate beneficiary of the July revolution. With the exception of Juárez Celman and his immediate circle, all existing factions and parties benefited. It has been noted how Roca's attempts to gain control of the PAN and of the country had met with little success. He negotiated with Mitre from a weak position with the aim of consolidating his authority within the PAN and the country, of controlling the presidential elections of 1892, and of avoiding electoral competition at a time when the country was in financial distress.

The UC did not survive the negotiation process of the agreement with the PAN, and there were many reasons why the UC was so fragile and finally split. It should be remembered that it had originally been a temporary coalition, a smokescreen for the revolution of 1890, and had no longer-term objectives other than the overthrow of Juárez Celman. The leading members of the coalition belonged to different political backgrounds; although it was easy for them to unite for a temporary aim, it proved difficult to maintain unity on a more permanent basis. After the revolution of July 1890, the various factions of the UC read differently the post-Juárez Celman political panorama. The *mitristas* were happy with the outcome, del Valle wanted the formation of a well-organized opposition, and Alem, still committed to revolution, preached for the end of the

115 Luis and Roque Sáenz Peña (father and son) had manifested different political preferences since the 1880s. Whereas Roque had sided with Juárez Celman, Luis had been a member of the UC, president of the UC of the Province of Buenos Aires (November–December 1890), and potential presidential candidate of the UC in 1891. For Luis Sáenz Peña's acceptance of his presidential candidacy offered by Roca, see Luis Sáenz Peña to Roca, 24 February 1892, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 66.

116 This election is described in Chapter 4.

PAN and its political regime. On the other hand, Mitre and his circle did not respect the internal organization adopted by the UC. Whereas the party had introduced formal procedures for decisions on party policies (these had to be consulted in and approved by a National Convention and the National Committee), Mitre, loyal to the style of the 1870s, negotiated the agreement with Roca on his own and publicly announced it with total independence from the remaining party members and from the party's new organization. And as the negotiations had been conducted with Mitre and the *mitrista* faction of the UC, Alem, Irigoyen, del Valle, and the others were placed in a secondary position inside a coalition whose balance had always been fragile.

The Radical Party was founded by those members of the UC who rejected the agreement with Roca. After the split of the UC they held their own party convention on 15 August 1891, electing Bernardo de Irigoyen and Manuel Garro as candidates for the presidential election of April 1892. During the second half of 1891, the Radicals enjoyed considerable power, counting with the support of many factions in the provinces. The UC of Córdoba, Mendoza, San Luis, and San Juan aligned with Alem and Irigoyen against the agreement, while in Santiago del Estero, Santa Fe, Catamarca, and Tucumán the party split between those in favor and those against the alliance with the PAN.<sup>117</sup>

However, by the autumn of 1892 the Radicals had suffered significant reverses. Prominent figures from the city of Buenos Aires, such as Aristóbulo del Valle and Lucio V. López, abandoned the party. The former, disillusioned with both *mitristas* and radicals, resigned his seat in the Senate and retired from public life;<sup>118</sup> the latter, as we have already mentioned, joined the *modernistas*.<sup>119</sup> Reverses also took place in the provinces. The governor of Entre Ríos, for example, who had initially supported the Radicals, later withdrew his support in favor of Roque Sáenz Peña's candidacy. A faction of the Radicals from Córdoba joined the party in government in return for strategic seats on the board of the Banco Hipotecario of Córdoba.<sup>120</sup> The Province of Mendoza, whose governor had supported

117 For the local situation in Córdoba, see Garro to Estrada, 12 February 1891, *Archivo Garro*; in Mendoza: J. Barragüeiro to Mitre, 3 July 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, A8C19C54N13373; in San Luis: J.A. Ortiz Estrada to Mitre, 13 July 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, AEC68C12N14916; in San Juan: D. Morón to Mitre, 17 July 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, AEC68C19N14803; in Santiago: Soria to Mitre, 9 July 1891, *Archivo Mitre*, AEC75C13N15484; in Santa Fe: P. Funes to Roca, 7 May 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 63; in Catamarca: F.F. Avellaneda to Roca, 9 October 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 65; in Tucumán: M. Gorostiaga to P. García, 13 June 1891, *Archivo García*, 20-3-12.

118 Del Valle resigned from the Senate on 27 June 1891.

119 Lucio V. López to Roque Sáenz Peña, 9 February 1892, *Archivo Lucio V. López*, 21-2-7, N. 5538.

120 José Pitt to Roca, 24 May 1892, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 64; Olmos to Roca, 22 September 1892, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 65.

the Radicals, was federally intervened in January 1892.<sup>121</sup> The Unión Católica, which had also sided with the Radicals against Mitre, suffered a split. Luis Sáenz Peña was a well-known Catholic, and after his candidacy was launched, Estrada, president of the Unión Católica, came to the conclusion that "with Luis Sáenz Peña in the presidency, the country can be considered rescued."<sup>122</sup> This section of the Unión Católica was not too pleased with Alem's refusal to support the candidacy of Luis Sáenz Peña and suggested to Garro, president of the UC in Córdoba, that he should resign his candidacy for the vice-presidency in order to put pressure on the Radicals.<sup>123</sup> Garro refused and the Catholic faction of Córdoba aligned itself with Alem.<sup>124</sup> The bulk of the Unión Católica, however, supported the candidacy of Luis Sáenz Peña.

When the Radicals began to reassess their forces and to organize the Radical Party, they had lost the majority of the members of the original UC. Of the sixty members of the UC's committee in the capital, only twenty sided with the Radicals.<sup>125</sup> Most local committees in the city and Province of Buenos Aires had aligned themselves with Mitre.<sup>126</sup> Of the 111 members who had attended the convention in Rosario in January 1891, only forty-eight attended the Radicals' convention of August 1891.<sup>127</sup> In the interior of the country, the Radicals had the support of significant factions only in Mendoza, Catamarca, and Córdoba, and minor ones in Tucumán, San Luis, and Santa Fe.<sup>128</sup>

However, regardless of their number, the Radicals relied on an important political resource: revolution. As we see in the next chapter, they put forward an ideological defense of this traditional means of contesting political power in Argentina. The Radicals' belief that under certain conditions revolution was a legitimate means of action was not just theoretical: They proceeded to organize a series of armed uprisings throughout the country that would keep politics in constant turmoil.

121 For the events in Mendoza, see P.A. Lacoste, "Mendoza y la revolución del 90," in *Todo es Historia*, July 1990, N. 277, Año XXIV, pp. 22-45.

122 Estrada to Garro, 21 February 1892, *Archivo Garro*.

123 For Alem's instructions to the provinces to resist the candidature of Luis Sáenz Peña, see San Román to Roca, 25 February 1892, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 66. For the negotiations between Estrada and Garro, see Estrada to Garro, 21 February 1892, *Archivo Garro*.

124 Garro to Estrada, 3 March 1892, *Archivo Garro*. 125 *El Diario*, 28 and 29 June 1891.

126 Botana, *El orden conservador*, Buenos Aires, 1977, pp. 167 and 168.

127 *El Diario*, 15 August 1891. The estimates of *La Nación* were slightly different but with the same implications about the losses for the Radicals. From 115 members of the convention of Rosario, *La Nación* affirmed that 60 sided with the *mitristas*, 37 with the Radicals, and 18 abstained from further political participation. See Noble, *Cien años*, p. 423.

128 *La Prensa*, "Reestrospectivo de 1891," 1 January 1892.



## The Radicals in Action: Part I

In July 1891, the Radicals began to regroup. They had not emerged well from the frenzied bargaining of 1890–1891, losing both prominent party members and strategic positions in the provinces. By this time they had adopted the name “Radicals,” disparagingly conferred on them because of their vociferous rhetoric. They responded proudly:

Times have changed and with them they have also changed the meaning of the words to the extent that, today to seek basic freedoms and electoral guarantees has become such an intransigence, such an impertinent threat that cannot longer be done with the simplicity of the old times. For such a small matter it is necessary now to be called radicals.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter analyzes who the Radicals were, what they did, and why. The first section describes Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) members and provides a profile of two of its prominent leaders, Leandro Alem and Bernardo de Irigoyen. This is followed by a close analysis of the political discourse of the Radical Party, a discourse largely reconstructed from the pages of the party's daily, *El Argentino*. The Radicals launched a public campaign to legitimize the use of violence against a corrupt government, which triggered an intense debate between government and opposition. The last two sections of the chapter describe the revolutionary outbreaks of July, August, and September, 1893, organized by the Radical Party. The debate of the 1890s was not merely theoretical; it was closely related to the identity and strategies adopted by the UCR.

### The Radical Leaders

Leandro N. Alem was the outstanding leader of the UCR from 1891, when he became its president, until his death in 1896. The country's political tradition of *personalismo* (forming political organizations around a strong personality) and the paucity of experienced politicians within the UCR at its inception combined with Alem's character to make him the party's

1 *El Argentino*, 5 July 1891, also reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, p. 15.

dominant figure. The UCR was thoroughly imbued with Alem's personality. As Paul Groussac put it, the Radicals "do not need a badge to distinguish themselves, it is enough to mention the name of their leader."<sup>2</sup> Alem's tempestuous character invested his leadership with a moral aura and his party with a mission: the restoration of the republic. For party members Alem represented "the country, its salvation, national honor, freedom and justice,"<sup>3</sup> and they defined his leadership thus: "Alem is the boss of the Radical Party. . . . He is not simply the president of the National Committee. He is more than that. He is the chosen one in this supreme moment to steer the country to salvation."<sup>4</sup>

Leandro Alem was born on 11 March 1842 in the neighborhood of Balvanera, Buenos Aires, the fourth child of Leandro Antonio Alén (the son of an immigrant from Galicia) and Tomasa Ponce, a *porteña*.<sup>5</sup> His father had inherited a *pulpería* (rural store or canteen) and had acquired some property in Buenos Aires's Monserrat neighborhood. During Rosas's regime (1829–1852) Leandro Antonio Alén had been a member of the *mazorca*, the dictator's instrument of terror and repression; this cost him his life when Rosas was overthrown. Leandro Alem was eleven when his father was publicly hanged; his death brought disgrace to the family and deprived them of a regular livelihood. To avoid any connection with his father's *rosista* past, Leandro Alén changed his name to Leandro N. Alem. After finishing school at the Colegio de la América de Sur, he obtained a law degree in 1869. His studies were interrupted by his army service. In 1859, he fought in the battle of Cepeda; in 1861 in Pavón and in 1865 in the Paraguayan War.

In his youth he had supported Adolfo Alsina and his Partido Autonomista. During his student days he participated in the founding of several *autonomista* clubs together with Aristóbulo del Valle, Carlos Pellegrini,

2 P. Groussac, *Los que pasaban*, Buenos Aires, 1972, p. 233.

3 F. Barroetaveña, "Perfiles," in Alem, *su vida, su obra, tragedia de su muerte, las doctrinas democráticas del fundador de la Unión Cívica Radical a través de documentos y discursos escritos*, Buenos Aires, 1928, p. 45.

4 Barroetaveña, "Perfiles," p. 52. See also Adolfo Saldías's similar comments on the relationship between the party and Alem in his "Leandro N. Alem," *MyD*, Vol. II, p. 40.

5 The two most complete biographies of Alem are T. Manacorda, *Alem, un candillo una época*, Buenos Aires, 1941; A. Yunque, *Leandro N. Alem. El hombre de la multitud*, Buenos Aires, 1953. See also C. Avallone, *Leandro N. Alem*, Buenos Aires, 1927; J.F. Sívori, *Alem, Tribuno del pueblo*, Buenos Aires, 1956; R. Farías Alem, *Alem y la democracia Argentina*, Buenos Aires, no date; F. Luna, "Alem, la terrible integridad," in G. Ferrari and E. Gallo (comps.), *La Argentina del ochenta al centenario*, Buenos Aires, 1980, pp. 245–253; L.V. Sommi, *Hipólito Yrigoyen: Su vida y su época*, Buenos Aires, 1957, pp. 15–94; C.A. Cabral, *Alem, informe sobre la frustración argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1967; V. Guerrero, *Alem, historia de un caudillo*, Buenos Aires, 1951; "El Dr. Leandro Alem," *El Argentino*, 9 May 1893. There has been some dispute on the origins of Alem's grandparents, which was clarified by H. Fernández de Burzaco y Barrios, *Los antepasados de Alem fueron gallegos*, Buenos Aires, 1955.

Lucio V. López, Roque Sáenz Peña, and Carlos Estrada – all of whom would remain political friends and/or rivals until death. His first public appearances were as a poet and young politician, but initially he did not excel in either department. He published romantic and nostalgic poems in the newspapers, and his first political speech in 1873 received mixed reviews: “Alem’s speech lacks what is necessary for a popular oratory, but has the serene intonation of someone who is deeply convinced by his ideas.”<sup>6</sup> After a brief appointment as secretary of the Argentine Legation at the Court of Rio de Janeiro in 1869, Alem returned to Buenos Aires and soon became embroiled in party politics: He was a candidate for Congress in 1870 and 1871, but failed to get a seat. He had better luck in 1872, when he became a deputy in the legislature of the Province of Buenos Aires, a post to which he was reelected two years later. Alem’s most prominent political roles before the formation of the UCR were as a founding member of the Partido Republicano and a strong opponent of the transformation of Buenos Aires into a federal district in 1880.

The republicans were a short-lived splinter group led by Aristóbulo del Valle and Lucio V. López that had broken from the Partido Autonomista in 1877.<sup>7</sup> They experienced a brief period of success, which took Alem to the legislature in 1878,<sup>8</sup> but the del Valle–Alem ticket was defeated in the elections for the governorship and vice-governorship of the Province of Buenos Aires in 1878 by Carlos Tejedor. The Partido Republicano disbanded after the electoral defeat and most of its members, Alem included, returned to the Partido Autonomista.<sup>9</sup> When President Avellaneda drafted a law in 1880 to make Buenos Aires the federal district of the Republic, Alem was a member of the Legislature of Buenos Aires. He opposed the bill,

6 Some of his poems can be found in, *MyD*, Vol. IV, pp. 25–91; for the review of his first public speech see, *El Nacional*, 5 May 1873.

7 For the politics of “conciliación” and its effects, see Chapter 1, and E. Gallo, “La gran expansión económica y la consolidación del régimen conservador liberal, 1875–1890,” in R. Cortés Conde and E. Gallo, *Argentina: La república conservadora*, Buenos Aires, 1972, pp. 63–65.

8 For the history of the *Partido Republicano*, see *MyD*, Vol. V, pp. 297–309.

9 Some historians, such as G. Del Mazo, *El Radicalismo. Ensayo sobre su historia y doctrina*, Vol. I, Buenos Aires, 1957, p. 15, have considered the *Partido Republicano* as an antecedent of the Radical Party given that Alem was a leading figure in both parties; that both organizations were founded in rejection of an electoral agreement; and that both party platforms included free elections, decentralization of power, and ethical standards in public administration. However, these are not sufficient grounds for establishing direct links or asserting continuity between the two parties. The political circumstance in which they emerged were different, as were their rhetoric and the political means they employed. As for the similarity of their platforms, all platforms of contemporary clubs and parties included similar principles, as can be seen by comparing the manifestos of the “Club la Igualdad” with the “Club 25 de Mayo,” with the “Club Electoral,” and with Mitre’s manifesto of 1874. See Sívori, *Alem*, p. 18, 24, 47, and *MyD*, Vol. IV, p. 275–281.

delivering the longest and most articulate speech of his career.<sup>10</sup> After the law was passed, he resigned from his seat in the Legislature and temporarily retired from political life for ten years. His withdrawal from politics was emblematic of his personality. He believed that he had no place in the new public order the PAN was constructing and that he so vehemently rejected.

He never married, although he had the reputation of a womanizer. He lived all his life with his sister Tomasa. Another of his sisters ran away with a priest in her youth, losing contact with the family, while his third sister married Martín Irigoyen and gave him a nephew, Hipólito, with whom Alem was to have a troubled relationship.

Once he had joined the Radical Party Alem became the first professional politician in Argentina. At the time, most politicians had other professions. However, Alem lived until his death by and for politics. The Radical Committee of the federal capital supplied Alem with an income sufficient to provide for his austere lifestyle.<sup>11</sup> Only when in dire need would he practice as a lawyer or add his name to the practice of a friend. When he died most of his belongings, including his library, were sold at auction to provide for his sister Tomasa. Some historians have exaggerated Alem's poverty in order to claim that the Radical Party was a "popular" party concerned with the underprivileged.<sup>12</sup> But Alem was not a Radical because he was poor; he was poor because he was a professional Radical. His concerns centered on constitutional issues and on the political development of the country; it was a concern that involved all Argentine citizens regardless of their social class.<sup>13</sup>

He always dressed in black, had a large white beard, and became, after the Revolution of 1890, something of a mystical figure for those inside and outside his party. Juan Balestra, a prominent *juarista*, described him as follows:

He wears a halo of the distinguished intellectual, of fearless courage and of total lack of interest in material goods. . . . There is in him a mystical aspiration toward something superior, undefined, while he is also at the same time a tempestuous and arbitrary rebel. He is not seduced by fortune, by women, by positions, not even by life itself.<sup>14</sup>

Like many politicians of the time, Alem was a freemason, reaching the rank of "grand master" in 1884. Freemasonry was almost the badge of the

<sup>10</sup> *DSCDBA*, Vol. II, 1880, pp. 67-148.

<sup>11</sup> A. Fournier, "Como pagan los favorecidos," *MyD*, Vol. III, p. 389.

<sup>12</sup> H. Clemente, *El Radicalismo: Trayectoria política*, Buenos Aires, 1983, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> For Alem's rejection of the incipient socialist ideas of the time, see his speech on the federalization of Buenos Aires in *MyD*, Vol. VI, p. 267.

<sup>14</sup> J. Balestra, *El Noventa*, Buenos Aires, 1959, p. 78.



anticlerical politician.<sup>15</sup> But Alem's anti-Catholic tendency was kept under wraps during his leadership of the UCR since the party included many Catholics, particularly from the Province of Córdoba.

Not much is known about the intellectual influences that acted on him; at best we know some of the titles of books in his library.<sup>16</sup> He was belittled by contemporaries as a man of action insufficiently educated for government. His followers took his defense to extremes:

For many Alem is merely a man of action, destined to fight in combat. He is believed to lack the enlightenment and the prudence necessary rightly to confront the great social, administrative and political problems whose solution depends on the statesman. Those who think of him in this way are mistaken. Dr. Alem is a man of learning, of extensive and profound scholarship in history, literature and jurisprudence, political economy, philosophy and sociology, he has professed advanced, progressive and liberal ideas in all the sciences that enlighten the men of State.<sup>17</sup>

A more accurate description lay somewhere between the two views. He was not a theorist or intellectual, but he was familiar with many of the most important works of his time. He had a good understanding of the histories of the United States and England, two countries whose institutions he thought Argentina should imitate. He was also an admirer of Italian politicians as diverse as Cavour, Mazzini, and Garibaldi.<sup>18</sup> But he was not doctrinaire. His speeches contained simple ideas, expressed in a simple but passionate manner, repeated throughout his life. He held strong ideas about good and evil and applied them strictly in the realm of politics. The good citizen was one who participated in the political life of his community, had a legitimate occupation, and was ready, if necessary, to take up arms against an illegitimate government. It was to this good citizen that the rhetoric of the UCR was directed.

Historians have tended to divide Alem's life into two periods. The first is that of Alem's activism in the Autonomista and the Republicano parties, the culmination of this period being his speech against the federalization of Buenos Aires in 1880. The second period is his leadership of the Radical Party. However, this division has stood in the way of an overall view of Alem's life; it inhibits our understanding of three interrelated matters: Alem's self-perception, his reading of the political situation of the 1890s,

15 Not much is known about freemasons in Argentina. See A. Lappas, *La masonería argentina a través de sus hombres*, Buenos Aires, 1966, and E.J. Corbiere, *La masonería: Política y sociedades secretas*, Buenos Aires, 1998.

16 For a brief listing of these titles, see Yunque, *Leandro N. Alem*, p. 212. These include works by Alberdi, Laboulaye, Story, Montesquieu, and Macaulay.

17 Barroetaveña, "Perfiles," pp. 49–50. For a more recent portrait of Alem as a doctrinaire, see N. Botana, "Alem era un doctrinario," *La Nación*, 19 July 1988.

18 L. Alem, "Italia," *La Defensa del Pueblo*, 13 January 1891.

and the role that he envisaged for the Radical Party. Alem had been an active politician in the 1870s and abandoned politics in 1880; he saw himself as one of the few contemporaries who had not been stained by participating in the corrosive governments of the 1880s. Much of his reading of the political situation of the 1890s was based on his experiences during the 1870s; Alem would dream until his death of the return of the competitive political life of Buenos Aires, when the city-province was still at the center of national politics. The role he bestowed upon the Radical Party, as we shall see, was to direct the reversion to the political path established during the 1870s, and from which the country had deviated under Roca and Juárez Celman.

During the 1870s Alem had organized clubs, mobilized the electorate, and performed the customary election-day tasks. During an election in 1874, Alem "disbanded with shots a polling table, seized the ballot box, let his partisans cast their vote and afterward broke it with an axe because he did not have the key to open it for the counting of the votes."<sup>19</sup> This took place in a political context in which the two main parties were equally powerful, electoral battles were tumultuous, and political life, particularly in the city of Buenos Aires, was turbulent.<sup>20</sup> In Alem's view, this was a sign of healthy political life. Many saw these often violent confrontations as evidence of Argentine backwardness; Alem saw them as standard components of civilized politics. As he declared in 1875:

we are not that corrupted, there is not so much fraud and crime in our political or administrative procedures. We are at the same level as any of the most cultivated and civilized nations although, undoubtedly, like them, we have not yet reached the perfection to which we should aspire. The nature of the events that take place here also take place everywhere else, even in the United States, the first nation that we imitate.<sup>21</sup>

However, he later argued that politics had taken a turn for the worse in 1880. In the debate on the federalization of Buenos Aires in that year, he predicted the construction of a new institutional and political order that he himself passionately opposed. The consolidation of the PAN and the establishment of a federal capital in Buenos Aires would, he argued, result in excessive centralization of power and a government divorced from public opinion. The president's will would then decide the destiny of Argentina and "the Republic will be at the mercy of his good or bad intentions, of his good or bad will, of his passions and his whims." He also envisaged the death of the country's political life; the political parties

19 Quoted in H. Sabato and E. Palti, "Quién votaba en Buenos Aires?: Práctica y teoría del sufragio, 1850-1880," *Desarrollo Económico*, Vol. 30, N. 119 (October-December) 1990, p. 403.

20 For the political life of Buenos Aires in the 1870s, see H. Sabato, *La política en las calles: Entre el voto y la movilización. Buenos Aires, 1862-1880*, Buenos Aires, 1998.

21 DSCDBA, 25 September 1874, reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. IV, p. 354.

would, he thought, vanish under the weight of an all-powerful national executive, and politics would be reduced to "a clique living and operating under the government's clout."<sup>22</sup> A centralized political order was, he claimed, a subversion of the country's republican constitution and its political traditions.<sup>23</sup>

He returned to politics in 1890, claiming that time had vindicated his prophecies. In his view, ten years of PAN domination had resulted in a corrupt government that was in every respect detrimental. The PAN had instilled a materialistic doctrine of progress which had corrupted society from top to bottom. And it was the worst kind of corruption: "that damaging corruption that leaves men with no notion of what is fair, honest, or legal and that, by making individual interest and the enjoyment of material goods the only objective of life, drags the people like corpses to the feet of ambitions and tyrannies."<sup>24</sup> The PAN had also betrayed Argentina's constitution by destroying its federal system, creating a country where

the governors . . . lacking popular origins, completely divorced from public opinion, inevitably seek the material and moral support of the President of the Republic to maintain themselves in power. . . . They are inevitably submissive, obedient, dependent of the will of Executive Power.<sup>25</sup>

His mission as leader of the Radical Party was to return the country to the path from which Roca and Juárez Celman had diverted it. He claimed to have the right credentials for this task given that, following his retirement from public life in 1880, he was unstained by involvement with the new regime:

My personal honor, my ideas, my principles, advised me to do what I finally did: I retired to private life to observe, to await for the process to unfold and then see who was right . . . for ten years I remained in ostracism, isolation and abstention because I never wanted to give up my principles . . . in politics, as in everything else, one does what one should do, and when the only thing that you can do is bad, then you do nothing.<sup>26</sup>

The other major UCR leader was Bernardo de Irigoyen (1822–1906).<sup>27</sup> There was little in common between Alem and Irigoyen. Unlike Alem,

22 DSCDBA, 15 November 1880, reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VI, pp. 267, 262.

23 DSCDBA, 17 November 1880, reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VI, p. 291.

24 DSCS, 20 June 1891, reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VII, p. 232.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 214. 26 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

27 Accounts of his life can be found in J. Bianco, *Bernardo de Irigoyen: Estadista y pionero (1822–1906)*, Buenos Aires, 1927; J. Velar de Irigoyen, *Bernardo de Irigoyen: Algo en torno a una vida argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1957; *Extracto de rasgos biográficos del Dr. Bernardo de Irigoyen y plácemes con motivo de su elección de gobernador de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 1898; C. Melo, "Bernardo de Irigoyen," in Ferrari, *La Argentina del ochenta*, pp. 165–174; F. Barroetaveña, *Don Bernardo de Irigoyen: Perfiles biográficos*, Buenos Aires, no date.

Irigoyen belonged to a traditional Buenos Aires family, was highly educated, and possessed an ample fortune. He too had had a long and impressive political career. After he obtained his law degree in 1843, he had been a diplomat of the Argentine Confederation in Chile (1844-1846) and Mendoza (1846-1850), had become Urquiza's representative with the provinces of the interior in the negotiations which ended in the Congreso Constituyente of 1853, and had been a member of the Constitutional Assembly in 1859 and a member of the Constitutional Assembly of the Province of Buenos Aires (1870-1873). He joined the Partido Autonomista, which in 1870 took him to Congress (1870-1875), and served as minister of foreign relations (1875-77) and minister of the interior (1877-79) under Nicolás Avellaneda. He put himself forward as presidential candidate for the elections of 1880 without success and eventually supported Roca.

When Roca offered him the Ministry of Foreign Relations in 1880, Irigoyen did not hesitate. By then he had acquired a reputation as a master of foreign affairs, and Roca feared a potential war with Chile. When these fears were resolved, Roca transferred him to the Ministry of Interior (1881-1884). Irigoyen took this as a sign of Roca's good will and expected the president to support his own presidential candidacy in 1886. However, he was rapidly disillusioned, and after a brief attempt to become an independent candidate, he sided with the Partidos Unidos. His resentment toward Roca was deep. Years later he would say of him: "He lacks the strength that at least gives authority to the arbitrary resolutions. . . . He preferred to run the country through repression and leave his citizens with the conviction that it is nonsensical to think in the elections as prescribed by the Constitution."<sup>28</sup>

Although he had lent his name to the Unión Cívica (UC), he took no active part in its activities before the revolution of 1890. After the formal organization of the UC at the end of 1890, Irigoyen had supported his close friend Luis Sáenz Peña as the party's presidential candidate, thinking that Sáenz Peña could unite the various factions of the coalition. When the party split between Alem and Mitre, Irigoyen sided with the Radicals. But when the *mitristas* and the PAN launched the candidacy of Luis Sáenz Peña to stop his son from becoming president, many thought that Irigoyen would abandon the Radicals in support of his old friend. They were wrong; he became instead one of the Sáenz Peña government's fiercest and most effective critics.

As a leading figure in the Radical Party, Irigoyen was overshadowed by Alem. Alem was fond of public speeches, mass demonstrations, and the

28 B. Irigoyen, "Apuntes biográficos de Delfín Gallo," reprinted in Barreotaveña, *Don Bernardo de Irigoyen*, p. 51.



effective use of simple language. The two men differed greatly in style. Alem loved confrontation and absolutes; his political world was divided into friends and enemies. Irigoyen had stiff manners, a conservative outlook, and maintained close relations across the political spectrum. He felt equally comfortable in the Partido Autonomista, in Nicolás Avelaneda's administration, in the PAN, and in the Partidos Unidos. The two leaders were contrasted thus:

The intensity of the ardent tribune, the public agitator, the champion of democracy, clashed with the moderation of the statesman, the well-off member of parliament, the prudent adviser, the man of cultivated manners who avoids extremes and positions himself in the middle of the road, without the overstated passion or the intransigence of the *caudillo*, which are the characteristics of Dr. Alem.<sup>29</sup>

Their differences were, however, exaggerated by the political dailies in order to create the image of an internally divided party. Despite his courteous manners, Irigoyen became one of the PAN's most dangerous opponents. In his leadership of the Radical Party he was as damaging to the government as Alem's inflammatory speeches. Irigoyen's fortune financed the UCR's newspaper, *El Argentino*, and, more significant, many of the Radical revolutions, making possible the distribution of funds and munitions in the provinces.<sup>30</sup> His defense of armed struggle and his criticism of the government were, if not as implacable as Alem's, equally powerful and destabilizing.<sup>31</sup>

Alem and Irigoyen had a strained relationship. They had known each other since the early 1870s, when Irigoyen frequently headed the lists of candidates of the Partido Autonomista while Alem was at the bottom. In 1879, when Alem supported Irigoyen's candidacy for the presidency, Irigoyen withdrew. And when the same occurred again in the presidential campaign of 1886, their relationship suffered. In a series of open letters, Alem bitterly criticized Irigoyen.<sup>32</sup> That both became prominent leaders of the UCR was due more to political circumstance than to mutual affection.

What of the other leading figures of the Radical Party? The composi-

29 *El Diario*, 31 October 1891.

30 For Irigoyen's finance of revolts in the province, see E. Garzón to Roca, 3 November 1891, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 65.

31 For Irigoyen's attacks on the government of Sáenz Peña, see the series of articles published by *La Razón* of Montevideo during Irigoyen's exile in this city, compiled in *Explicaciones del Doctor Bernardo de Irigoyen con motivo del mensaje del Poder Ejecutivo al Congreso, solicitando la prórroga del estado de sitio en toda la República Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1893. See also Irigoyen's speech in the Senate, 22 September 1894, *DSCS*, 1894, pp. 425-541. See also his interpellation to Minister of Interior Manuel Quintana in September 1894, described in Chapter 5.

32 The letters are reprinted in, *MyD*, Vol. VII, pp. 8-21.

tion of the party's National Committee of 1892 – which included most of the important members of the UCR – was varied. But this heterogeneity was not a matter of social class. All the members were professionals; the majority were lawyers, journalists, or landowners. They included a historian (Adolfo Saldías), a prominent journalist from *La Prensa* (Remigio Lupo), and a novelist and theater-owner (Enrique Onrubia).<sup>33</sup> The UCR differed little if at all from the other parties in terms of the professions of its members.<sup>34</sup> The party's heterogeneity derived less from class than from political background and training. Some members of the committee had belonged to the Partido Autonomista,<sup>35</sup> others to the PAN; others had been juaristas or had taken part in the Partidos Unidos, while others had belonged to the Unión Católica.<sup>36</sup> There was also a significant generational difference among National Committee members, with equal proportions of men in their forties, thirties, and twenties.<sup>37</sup>

However, the most noteworthy feature of the Radical National Committee was the lack of political experience of most of its members. Most of the leading figures of the original UC had sided with Mitre, while most of its younger members and political amateurs had become Radicals.<sup>38</sup> Out of the 29 members who composed the UCR's National Committee of 1892, six remain unknown. Of the remaining 23, twelve had begun their political careers in 1890. Only five members had so much as been elected to Congress; the rest had not played any significant role in politics at all.<sup>39</sup> The lack of political experience of the members of the Radical Party could

33 For the details of the party leaders, see Appendix 2, "Details of the Members of the National Committee of the UCR in 1892."

34 There are only a few studies of the social composition of the members of other political parties for the period. However, Cantón's analysis of the professions of the members of Congress in 1888, most of which belonged to the PAN, shows no significant differences between them and the Radical National Committee. D. Cantón, *El parlamento argentino en épocas de cambio: 1890, 1916 y 1946*, Buenos Aires, 1966, pp. 38, 47. A few more studies have looked at the social composition of Congress to determine the existences of any difference in the social background of the leaders of the different parties for a later period, ranging from 1904 to 1916. No significant difference was found between the social background of the members of the PAN and the Radical Party. See Ezequiel Gallo and Silvia Sigal, "La formación de los partidos políticos contemporáneos: La Unión Cívica Radical (1890-1916)," *Desarrollo Económico*, April-September, 1963, Vol. 3, N. 1-2, pp. 212-222; P. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy: Conflict among the Political Elites, 1905-1905*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1974, pp. 30-31. These works have been analyzed by E. Zimmermann, *Los liberales reformistas: La cuestión social en la Argentina, 1890-1916*, Buenos Aires, 1995, pp. 29-35.

35 I am here referring to the Partido Autonomista, not to be confused with the PAN.

36 See Appendix 1 for a chronology of the political parties and factions of these years.

37 Similar age composition was found in a study of the members of the Radical Party in Bahía Blanca, Province of Buenos Aires. See R. Etchepareborada, "La estructura socio-política argentina y la generación del ochenta," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. XII, N. 1, 1978, p. 111.

38 J.A. Noble, *Cien años: dos vidas*, Buenos Aires, no date, p. 426. 39 See Appendix 2.

also be related to the high proportion of members aged in their twenties and thirties. The Radical Committee of the Capital of Buenos Aires, second in importance to the National Committee, exhibited similar characteristics; in fact most of its members were also members of the National Committee.<sup>40</sup> Over the next few years, the composition of the National Committee of the Radical Party changed very little.<sup>41</sup>

### A Time for Revolution

When sectors of the UC rejected an alliance with the PAN and founded the UCR, they were motivated largely by political expediency. The agreement for the presidential elections of 1892 had been negotiated directly between Mitre and Roca, which relegated Alem, Irigoyen, and their friends to a secondary role. This meant that governorships, seats in national and provincial legislative assemblies, local police appointments, bank directorships, and appointments in state schools and in the public administration would be distributed primarily among *mitristas* and *roquistas*. However, these practical considerations seem insufficient to explain the rise of the UCR. Ever since rumors of the deal had first reached the public in early 1891 and throughout the negotiations of that year, members of what finally became the Radical Party had expressed objections. Indeed, their campaign against the post-Juárez Celman political situation and their objections to any agreement with the PAN underpinned the political identity of the Radicals. When the party was founded, these objections were developed into a more coherent political discourse.

The ideas of the Radical Party have proved difficult to define. Two alternative views have been taken. Some have found no significant distinctions between the ideas espoused by the Radicals and the PAN, others have discerned sharp contrasts. Historians of the first tendency have looked at manifestos of all parties and deduced that the principles sustained by the Radical Party were ill-defined and far from distinctive.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, compar-

40 For the list of the members of the Radical Committee of the Capital, see *Tribuna*, 24 September 1892.

41 For the list of the members of the National Committee in the following years, see *El Argentino*, 13 July 1893; *La Prensa*, 3 February 1894; *El Diario*, 13 August 1895; *La Nación*, 2 April 1897.

42 K. Remmer, *Party Competition in Argentina and Chile: Political Recruitment and Public Policy, 1890-1930*, Lincoln and London, 1984, p. 25. D. Rock, *Politics in Argentina 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism*, Cambridge, 1975, p. 50. Gallo and Sigal, "La formación de los partidos políticos contemporáneos," pp. 179-189, 221-222. See also Cabral, *Alem*, pp. 22, 29; E. Gallo, "El Roquismo," *Todo es Historia*, N. 100, September 1975, pp. 26-27; M. Szuchman, *Mobility and Integration in Urban Argentina: Córdoba in the Liberal Era*, Austin and London, 1980, p. 174; Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy*, p. 9; A.M. Mustapic, "Conflictos institucionales durante el primer gobierno radical: 1916-1922," *Desarrollo Económico*, Vol. 24, N. 93 (April-June), 1984, pp. 85-108.

ison of the platforms of the UCR, UCN, and the PAN shows both how vague and how alike they were.<sup>43</sup> All parties claimed to stand for clean elections, enforcement of the principles embodied in the Constitution, and high moral standards in public life. The platforms of the parties of the 1890s were emblematic of Argentina's political culture. When the concept of political party regained an important place in the post-Rosas days, Bartolomé Mitre's ill-defined Partido Liberal set an example of vagueness in party platforms that lasted for a century and was faithfully followed by most political organizations.<sup>44</sup> But this does not mean that the Radical Party had no distinctive political principles, or that political ideas played no significant role in the formation of Argentina's party system. It simply means that party manifestos are not the right place to look for them.

Those who do find significant differences in the ideas of the Radical Party and the PAN have generally portrayed the former as created to bring an end to minority domination and establish a new system offering more equitable representation. The Radical Party thus becomes Argentina's "agent of modernization": the party that wanted to construct a new and modern political system.<sup>45</sup> But this argument bestows on the Radical Party a series of aims and objectives which the party did not profess. Its members did not desire a new institutional, political, or social order. No proposal for institutional or electoral reform is to be found in the pages of its newspaper, the public speeches of its members, or in their private correspondence; more significant, no such proposal can be inferred from their behavior in Congress.<sup>46</sup> On the contrary, their discourse was one of nostalgia for the good old days before the PAN arrived on the scene, when Argentina's institutional and political life, the Radicals claimed, functioned according to the precepts of its National Constitution.<sup>47</sup>

43 The platform of the Radicals can be found in *El Argentino*, 4 July and 28 August 1891. For the platforms of the UCN and the PAN, see, respectively, *La Nación*, 8 January 1894; *Tribuna*, 16 November 1892.

44 Halperín Donghi, "Una nación para el desierto argentino," p. Lii. The Socialist Party, founded in 1896, was an exception to this tradition. It had a detailed and well-defined platform which included legislation on labour and suffrage for women.

45 V.L. Sommi, *La Revolución del 90*, Buenos Aires, 1957, p. 160; A. Díaz de Molina, *La oligarquía argentina. Su filiación y su régimen*, Buenos Aires, 1972, pp. 347-668; H. Guido, *Secuelas del unicato*, Buenos Aires, no date, p. 95; J.L. Romero, *A History of Argentine Political Thought*, Stanford 1963, p. 209; Cantón, *El parlamento*, p. 19; J.F. Sívori, *La fundación de la Unión Cívica*, Buenos Aires, 1959, pp. 13-16; H. Gómez, *Significación histórica del radicalismo*, Buenos Aires, 1946, p. 8; R. Puiggrós, *Historia crítica de los partidos políticos*, Buenos Aires 1956, pp. 90-102; R. Botnik, *Yrigoyen y el primer movimiento radical*, Buenos Aires, 1989, p. 19; L.A. Romero "El surgimiento y la llegada al poder," in L.A. Romero et al., *El Radicalismo*, Buenos Aires, 1968, pp. 17-18, 22.

46 The Radicals' performance in Congress is analyzed in Chapter 5.

47 There have also been several attempts to link the Radicals' rhetoric of regeneration with the Spanish krausist movement, an intellectual trend of the mid-nineteenth century. However, while the krausist movement could have influenced Yrigoyen's Radical Party, there is no evidence that Alem's Radical Party was aware of this intellectual trend. Indeed, it has been repeatedly been



Historians have commonly insisted that the Radical Party's moralistic rhetoric constituted the party's ideological hallmark. This was the meaning attributed to the Radicals' vague, moralizing language, a discourse filled with terms like "corruption," "regeneration," and "ethical standards in public administration." However, Miguel Cané, reflecting (as a *modernista*) on what separated the Radical Party from other political forces, reached a different conclusion in 1984. After all, Cané reasoned, "when we had the opportunity . . . have not we cut abuses, persecuted delinquents and run public affairs normally? If their aim is to do what we have done, how can their program and their men be repugnant to us?"<sup>48</sup> Cané went on to specify the issue that not only invested the Radical Party with its own political identity, but also polarized political parties and triggered fierce political debate in the 1890s:

A political party that thinks revolution a natural component of an organized political system, a party which, when opposing an administrative or political measure, scorns the channels for opposition granted by the Constitution, resorts to subversive campaigning within the army and teaches an entire generation the idea that the freedom of the press, the freedom of Parliament, the independence of the magistrates, are all illusory guarantees, old wives' tales, and that the only positive action, the only effective method for ensuring that laws are obeyed and that society receives some benefit, is a good rebellion, that party cannot be fit for government. This is essentially what divides us from the Radical Party. . . .<sup>49</sup>

The legitimacy of the use of violence became the most hotly contested issue of the 1890s, dividing who was "in" and who was "out" of the Radical Party. The Radical's defense of revolution became their distinctive trait and isolated the party from other political forces. But revolution against what? Since the Radicals' campaign for, and resort to, revolution resulted from their opposition to the prevailing state of affairs, before considering

argued that krausism did not make an impact in Argentina until the twentieth century. For Spanish krausism, see J. López Morillas, *The Krausist Movement and Ideological Change in Spain, 1854-1874*, Cambridge, 1981; for those who argued that krausism is important for understanding the intellectual history of the Radical Party (including of Alem's Radical Party), see O. Álvarez Guerrero, *Política y ética social. Yrigoyen y el krausismo. Orígenes ideológicos de la UCR*, Buenos Aires, 1983, and his "Krausismo y radicalismo," in H. Biagini (comp.), *Orígenes de la democracia argentina: El trasfondo krausista*, Buenos Aires, 1989, pp. 75-90; H. Spalding, "Aspects of Change in Argentina, 1890-1914," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1965, p. 228. For those who argue that krausism did not make an impact in Argentina until the twentieth century, see A. Roig, *El espiritualismo argentino entre 1850 y 1900*, Buenos Aires, no date, and his "La cuestión de la etnicidad nacional y la ideología krausista," in Biagini, *Orígenes*, pp. 49-65; J. Dotti, *La letra gótica: Recepción de Kant en Argentina, desde el romanticismo hasta el treinta*, Buenos Aires, 1992, p. 62.

48 Draft of a letter of Miguel Cané to Carlos Pellegrini, 1894 (no date), *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 4, N. 2203.

49 Ibid.

the 1890s debate on the legitimacy of revolution, we need to describe the order which the Radical Party rejected.

The Radicals rejected the new political, institutional, and ideological order consolidated in the 1880s. For them, the PAN was just "an oligarchy of newcomers"<sup>50</sup> who had burst on the country's political scene, "taking possession of the government as if it was their own exclusive property, and of public funds as if they were nobody's property."<sup>51</sup> Above all, the PAN was accused of having betrayed Argentina's political traditions and damaged its institutions. From their mouthpiece, *El Argentino*, the Radicals declaimed:

The school and followers of the hero of the Desert Campaign (Roca), have left nothing standing after twelve years of domination. . . . The institutions, the public treasury, the people's rights, internal and external credit, ethics in politics and administration, the public spirit, even decency, everything has been exploited, humiliated and perverted, as if the entire Republic had been captured by vandals trained by Jesuits.<sup>52</sup>

The ideological differences between the Radical Party and the PAN derived from differing perspectives of the country's past and present and their implications for the future. The PAN and the Radical Party constructed different visions of Argentina's past. As we have seen, the PAN's was a negative one; for the party the history of Argentina as an organized nation had begun as recently as 1880, when the PAN came to power; its earlier history was an obscure period of violence and backwardness meriting oblivion (see Chapter 1). The Radicals, by contrast, presented a mythologized version. For them, Argentina's institutional history had begun with the National Constitution of 1853, which had defined the country's federal system, delimited the boundaries of the three branches of government, and protected citizens against the power of the state. The spirit of the Constitution of 1853 had, in their view, been consolidated in the following years when political parties competed against each other and citizens were actively involved in the country's political life.<sup>53</sup> With profound nostalgia, the Radicals venerated the "good old days of tumultuous democratic contests," when government and institutions functioned as the Constitution prescribed.<sup>54</sup>

50 "Manifiesto revolucionario de 1890," reprinted in *MyD*, vol. 8, Buenos Aires, pp. 7-48.

51 *El Argentino*, 7 August 1893.

52 "Traidores a la patria. La dictadura Roca," *El Argentino*, 30 January 1893.

53 Alem's speech in the Senate, 20 June 1891, *Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Senadores* (hereafter cited as *DSCS*), Buenos Aires, 1892, p. 273. See also E. Gallo, "Liberalismo, centralismo, federalismo: Alberdi y Alem en el 80," unpub. ms.

54 Alem's speech in the Senate, 20 June 1891; *DSCS*, 262-64. Nostalgia for the pre-1880 period was also shared later by other opponents of the PAN. After his disagreement with Roca and his departure from the PAN, Carlos Pellegrini in 1904 stated: "The *gran aldea* of those days (Buenos Aires) did not have wide avenues, the immense parks, pavement on the ground, or nights illu-

The Radical Party claimed that the country's political and institutional development, consolidated during the 1860s and 1870s, had been interrupted in the 1880s by the advent of the PAN. The PAN imposed a new political and institutional system that had brought about "the suppression of the public life . . . peace without liberty . . . the death of the civic spirit."<sup>55</sup> The Radicals accused the PAN of corrupting the country's institutions; "corruption" was one of the key words of Radical discourse. "Corruption was everywhere," Alem declared, referring to the 1880s, "and the worst of all corruption because it descended from the highest levels of the government, filtering down to all social classes."<sup>56</sup>

In its classical sense, corruption means "a thing being changed from its naturally sound condition," and this was the sense in which it was used by the Radicals.<sup>57</sup> After more than a decade in government, the radicals claimed that the PAN had subverted the country's institutions from the "sound condition" defined by the Constitution of 1853.<sup>58</sup> The balance of the three branches of government established by the Constitution had been corrupted by the centralization of power by the national executive which had taken place during the 1880s. While the Radicals believed it was the duty of government to resist the centralizing tendency of the national executive, the PAN had endowed the presidency with dangerously wide-ranging powers.<sup>59</sup>

The Radical Party claimed that Congress had been one of the main victims of this process as its role had been weakened by the expanding power of the president. More significant, the composition of Congress had also been affected by the government's continuous interference in the provinces and manipulation of elections. Electoral fraud, instigated by the state, threatened the principle of representation and undermined the legitimacy of the elected deputies and senators.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the federal system itself had not escaped transformation by the PAN. The overwhelming centralization of powers in the national executive, and the use of national resources to cement the PAN's national coalition had distorted the country's federal principles.<sup>61</sup> The president exploited national revenues

minated by electricity; but it had a great president, candidates who represented ideas and national aspirations, it had an intense civic life, in sum, in that *aldea* there were free and sovereign people"; Carlos Pellegrini, *Obras*, Buenos Aires, 1941, vol. 8, p. 403.

55 "Manifiesto del 2 de julio de 1891," in *MyD*, vol. 6, p. 8.

56 Alem's speech in the Senate, 20 June 1891, *DSCS*, p. 268.

57 Mark Philp, "Remarks on the Definition of Political Corruption," conference presented in the Institute of Latin American Studies, London, 5 June 1994.

58 *El Argentino*, 24 October 1891.

59 Alem's speech in the Senate, 6 and 20 June 1891, *DSCS*, pp. 101-2, 264-5.

60 Ibid. See also *El Argentino*, 24 October 1891.

61 *El Argentino*, 24 October 1891; "Revoluciones oficiales," *El Argentino*, 20 January 1892.

and the armed forces to ensure the obedience of the governors, who became mere "political agents of the president"<sup>62</sup> instead of controllers of the federal authority's natural tendency to overreach.<sup>63</sup>

The government defended itself by pointing to the stability and economic progress achieved since the 1880s. However, the order and progress on which the PAN prided itself was, for the Radicals, a further sign of decay: Luxury had been used to corrupt the political system and Argentine civic spirit.<sup>64</sup> What the PAN called peace, the Radicals called "the quiescence of serfdom"; for the Radical Party, progress was brought about not by the absence of party strife, but by its existence.<sup>65</sup> For them, only the competition of political parties could sustain the civic life of the people.<sup>66</sup> The principle of order was a noble one, but it had been exploited by "all grand and petty tyrants" to allow them "calmly to enjoy their illicit earnings":<sup>67</sup> "Brutal suppression through force of arms," the radicals claimed, "could not constitute a stable or efficient source of authority, gagging through arbitrariness and terror was neither order nor tranquility, and the people's prosperity was not constituted by the gains of speculators and vampires who absorb the national sap through favoritism and the fraudulent use of power."<sup>68</sup>

The PAN was accused of having imposed "new and unhealthy theories and doctrines" on the country.<sup>69</sup> One of these was the "pragmatic" notion of politics, which reduced political life to a series of transactions intended to avoid conflict and open confrontation.<sup>70</sup> The Radicals denounced this pragmatism; they believed that the open rivalry and competition of organized political parties was the main guarantee of a healthy political life, of the government's accountability, and, therefore, of the people's freedom.<sup>71</sup>

The Radical Party and the PAN were also divided by different conceptions of liberty. The PAN upheld a negative notion of liberty, emphasizing

62 Alem's speech in the Senate, 20 June 1891, *DSCS*, p. 264.

63 Ibid. See also Alem's speech in the Senate, 20 June 1891, *DSCS*, p. 101.

64 Alem speech in the Senate, 6 June 1891, *DSCS*, p. 104; "La causa del orden," *El Argentino*, 2 August 1892; "La Unión Cívica Radical," *El Argentino*, 7 January 1892.

65 *El Argentino*, 3 June 1891.

66 "Pueblo y gobierno," *El Argentino*, 16 December 1892.

67 "La causa del orden," *El Argentino*, 2 August 1892.

68 "Gobierno fuerte," *El Argentino*, 31 January 1893.

69 Alem's speech in the Radical National Convention of 11 November 1892, reprinted in *MyD*, vol. VIII, p. 124.

70 *Tribuna*, 14 October 1892.

71 See Alem's speeches in the Senate, 20 June 1891, *DSCS*, pp. 267-8; 6 June 1891, *DSCS*, p. 104; *El Argentino*, 3 June 1891 and 16 December 1892. These issues have also been analyzed by N. Botana, *La tradición republicana: Alberdi, Sarmiento y las ideas políticas de su tiempo*, Buenos Aires, 1984, pp. 13-26, 34-5, 111-6.



ing the citizen's private sphere. The role of political institutions was to protect the individual's private realm from encroachment by the state or by other citizens. The Radicals, by contrast, upheld a positive conception of liberty which emphasized the active participation of citizens in public life. For the Radicals it was the existence of the public realm, resting on the civic virtue of the citizens, that could best protect individuals from the menace of others or the state. The pragmatic theory of politics, it was claimed, had been used to kill the people's civic virtue.<sup>72</sup>

These different conceptions of liberty had important implications for the political debate of the 1890s. For those who sustained the negative concept of liberty, the decade of the 1880s represented an impressive development. The country's institutions having been strengthened, the state was now able to apply its authority and resources to protect the individual's rights. Order had finally been achieved and citizens could concentrate on their private business instead of being constantly interrupted by violent uprisings. Argentina's economic progress illustrated what could be achieved if people were able to devote their energies to activities other than party strife. The PAN's discourse contrasted sharply with that of the Radical Party. "The current government," Alem declared, "slackens moral fiber, shuts the door on public life, and tells the people they should take care of nothing but their economic business, stripping them of any patriotic interest."<sup>73</sup> For the Radicals, the PAN administrations had launched a direct attack against the people's positive freedom; people's civic virtues had been overwhelmed by a government vigilant against outbursts of public enthusiasm.<sup>74</sup>

The Radicals accused the PAN of corrupting the country's political life; the PAN accused the Radicals of seeking a return to a turbulent form of politics, which they hoped they had definitively eradicated. For the PAN, the Radicals symbolized regression, a party composed of "those who learn nothing and forget everything about the Republic's tempestuous history,"<sup>75</sup> who wanted a return to the period of "cruel disasters."<sup>76</sup> Alem was associated with outdated political practices, "the last and most representative specimen of a political type today superseded,"<sup>77</sup> and the party

72 See Alem's speeches in the Senate, 20 June 1891, *DSCS*, pp. 267-8; 6 June 1891, *DSCS*, p. 104. For an application of I. Berlin's classic distinction of these two concepts of liberty in the context of Argentina's late nineteenth-century political debate, see Botana, *La tradición republicana*, pp. 34-35, 110-116; Gallo, "Liberalismo, centralismo y federalismo," pp. 3-11; I. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in his *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford, 1958.

73 Alem's speech in the Senate, 6 June 1891, *DSCS*, p. 104.

74 Gallo, "Liberalismo, centralismo y federalismo," p. 5.

75 *Tribuna*, 3 February 1893. 76 *Tribuna*, 17 February 1897.

77 Paul Groussac, *Los que pasaban*, Buenos Aires, 1972, p. 321. Similar comments on Alem can be found in an essay written in 1891 found among Roca's papers, *Archivo Roca*, leg. 154.

members were described as dangerous fanatics, "dreamers of a perfect institutional life."<sup>78</sup> Contrasting notions of good government, of the role of politics and political parties in society, and of freedom lay at the heart of the virulent political debate on revolution. For the Radicals, Roca and his fellows "have created anarchy everywhere"; "notions of honest politics, ideas of honest administration, doctrines and lessons of decency, everything has disappeared under their pernicious influence."<sup>79</sup> That being the case, "who can deny that . . . a revolution means the exercise of a right sanctioned by the philosophical judgment of the world's history"?<sup>80</sup> For the Radicals, revolution was justified if it finally put an end to PAN administration and returned the country to its original constitutional path. This claim polarized the political forces of late nineteenth-century Argentina.

It should be stressed that the Radical Party of the 1890s did not use the term "revolution" in the sense of the "great revolutions" of France, the United States, Russia, Mexico, and China. Difficult to define, "revolution" today tends to describe a fundamental and violent change in the dominant values of a society, its political institutions, social structure, and leadership.<sup>81</sup> It implies the abrupt replacement of a political and/or social and/or institutional order.<sup>82</sup> Before the term acquired this meaning, "revolution" described a rather different phenomenon. Its origins were cosmological, denoting the rotation of bodies; it described circularity, a return to the point of origin. Applied to history or politics, it described alteration or turbulence but not necessarily the creation of a new order.<sup>83</sup> Revolution for the Radicals meant the legitimate use of violence to free society from an unlawful government and return it to a previous political order: the restoration of old traditions and the constitution. Revolution against an illegitimate government did not reflect a desire to create a new political, institutional, or socio-economic system. This cyclic notion of revolution was easily distinguished from other acts of political violence, such as rebellion or sedition, by the motives of those involved. Revolution meant liberation from a government that had abused its powers and a return to the country's previous institutional arrangements; rebel-

78 *Tribuna*, 8 July 1892. See also *Tribuna*, 19 May 1896.

79 "La causa del orden," *El Argentino*, 2 August 1892.

80 "Conservadores y revolucionarios," *El Argentino*, 21 January 1893.

81 For a review of the attempts to define revolution, see L. Stone, "Theories of Revolution," *World Politics*, 18:2 January 1966, pp. 159-176; E.J. Hobsbawm, "Revolution," in R. Porter and M. Teich (eds.), *Revolution in History*, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 5-14.

82 See, for example, S. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Haven, 1968, p. 264.

83 Vernon F. Snow, "The Concept of Revolution in Seventeenth Century England," *The Historical Journal*, 5: 2, 1962, pp. 167-174; P. Zagorin, *The Court and the Country: The Beginning of the English Revolution*, London, 1969, p. 13; H. Arendt, *On Revolution*, London, 1963, pp. 34-40; John Dinwiddy, "Conceptions of Revolution in the English Radicalism of the 1790s," in E. Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 535-60.

lion and sedition implied the use of violence in the naked quest for power, an illegitimate act which betrayed the national constitution and traditions.<sup>84</sup>

It has been argued that the cyclic sense of "revolution" was used by contemporaries during the English revolutions of the seventeenth century and the first years of the U.S. Revolution.<sup>85</sup> It prevailed until the earliest stages of the French Revolution, when it began to be replaced in Europe by the linear concept of "revolution" familiar today. What distinguished the French Revolution from previous ones was the desire to break with the past, the spirit of innovation. The concept of revolution was gradually and irreversibly transformed to embrace discontinuity, rupture, rejection of the old order, drastic change; tradition was replaced by reason, customs by the enumeration of rights, restoration by innovation.<sup>86</sup>

The Radicals of late nineteenth-century Argentina employed the cyclic concept of revolution, aiming to restore the "profoundly disturbed constitutional order" in the name of the "country's glorious traditions."<sup>87</sup> In the words of Alem:

When power is abused, when the political system that the people has chosen to guarantee their rights and liberty has been broken at its foundation, the government has then lost all authority, has gone beyond the boundaries of the law, and has, therefore, become the people's true aggressor.<sup>88</sup>

Citing the model of the English revolutions "whose objective was to restore their liberties and institutions," the Radicals openly rejected the experience of the French Revolution, which "shook the entire society and encapsulated a spirit of complete and profound innovation in the politi-

84 Snow, "The Concept of Revolution," p. 169; Zagorin, *The Court*, p. 15; Arendt, *On Revolution*, pp. 32-3.

85 While it has been thought that by the late eighteenth century in England the modern term of revolution was already in use, it has been convincingly argued that the cyclical meaning of revolution still prevailed at that time. See Dinwiddy, "Conceptions of Revolution," pp. 535-560; Gunther Lottes, "Radicalism, Revolution and Political Culture: An Anglo-French Comparison," in M. Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 78-98. It has also been argued that the equation of "revolution" with "restoration" was atypical of the eighteenth-century usage, that it reflected a way of setting the events of 1688 apart from the threatening disorder and change represented by other revolutions. See Keith Michael Baker, "Revolution," in C. Lucas (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, Oxford, New York, 1988, pp. 41-45.

86 The transformation of the concept from its cyclical to its modern, linear meaning has been attributed to Thomas Paine. Dinwiddy, "Conceptions," p. 539.

87 "La Unión Cívica Radical," *El Argentino*, 18 May 1893; Alem's speech in the Radical National Convention of 11 November 1892, *MyD*, Vol. VIII, p. 124. See also *El Argentino*, 1 July 1890, 18 and 10 June and 24 October 1891, 20 January and 23 March 1892, 31 July 1893.

88 Alem's speech in the Senate, 20 June 1891, *DSCS*, p. 266.

cal, social and economic orders."<sup>89</sup> Time and again the Radicals claimed that there was nothing novel in their intentions; their aim was "merely the restoration of the institutions without wanting to reform any of them."<sup>90</sup> They saw themselves as true conservatives, aiming to rescue the country's institutional and political life from the domination of a political party that in a few years had subverted it entirely. "For me," Alem stated in Congress, "the revolutionaries are those who extinguish public liberties and, therefore, place the country in an abnormal and unconstitutional position."<sup>91</sup> The Radicals claimed they were forced to rebel against these "revolutionary governments" and restore the country to its traditional path. From their seats in Congress and in the pages of the *El Argentino*, the Radicals defended the revolution of July 1890 in these terms, preparing the public for the revolutions that they would organize throughout the decade.

The PAN's spokesmen defended themselves in the pages of *Tribuna*. Their counter-argument was twofold. On the one hand, they constantly enumerated the benefits of peace and order. "It is not revolutions *a la sudamericana* that have brought progress to the republic," they argued, "but the few years of relative peace briefly enjoyed between 1852 and the present."<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, *Tribuna* sought to frighten the public with prospects of civil war, whose consequences would include the "waste of public resources, the many lives unnecessarily sacrificed, immense discredit abroad, the flight of capital needed for commerce and industry. . . ."<sup>93</sup>

To this, the Radicals replied with the classical distinction between revolution and rebellion. What made revolution legitimate was the intention of those who revolted and the circumstances that provoked the uprising:

Without any doubt a revolution is a crime against the country and against civilization when its motives are disgraceful, when the institutions function freely and regularly, and when the principles of justice are universally recognized and fairly applied to everybody. But when all this has been completely lost, replaced by the brutal arbitrariness of despotic

89 Ibid. See also his speech on 20 July 1891, *DSCS*, pp. 366–7; and Aristóbulo del Valle's speech in the Senate, 9 June 1891, *DSCS*, pp. 133–4. When during previous decades there was constant reference to the experience of France and Spain, during the 1890s the Radicals embraced England and the United States as the countries whose histories provided the most valuable lessons for their current struggle and for Argentina's political development.

90 *El Argentino*, 18 June 1891.

91 Alem's speech in the Senate, 20 June 1891, *DSCS*, p. 266. These same concepts can also be found in "Al pueblo Argentino," pamphlet of the UCR, 1892, *Archivo Adolfo Saldías*, Leg. 3-6-3, N. 276; and in "Gobiernos revolucionarios," *El Argentino*, 20 January 1892.

92 *Tribuna*, 22 July 1892. 93 Ibid.



wills, we cannot simply think, without forgetting ourselves, of the material damage that a revolutionary movement could bring.<sup>94</sup>

The PAN members did not accept this distinction. For them, all revolutions "are no more than insurrections and seditions against the law" and were therefore simply a matter for government repression.<sup>95</sup> In their view, revolutions were never legitimate or beneficial. Through the official press, the government presented the alternatives of order and revolutions as irreconcilable opposites. "We cannot hesitate between the two tendencies," *Tribuna* stated, "we must reject anything coming from the revolutionaries. Their program consists of demolition behind which one can foresee the long struggle, the deepest social upheavals and chaos."<sup>96</sup>

The PAN leaders acknowledged that the political system of the 1880s was not perfect but, following a Burkean argument, they argued that its improvement should be "the result of long years and not of violent upheavals."<sup>97</sup> They also developed a justification for their political system, a justification which conveniently put the blame on the Radicals. The threats of the Radical Party, their vociferous rhetoric, and public campaigns in favor of insurrection justified the very system that the UCR sought to destroy. It was natural, the PAN argued, that, when threatened with the prospect of insurrection, those in government should form political coalitions in self-defense.<sup>98</sup> The arguments became self-reinforcing. The PAN defended its political system as a response to the threat of Radical-led revolution, while the Radicals claimed that the very existence of the PAN regime legitimized the use of violence. The justification for uprisings would disappear only when the PAN political system had been destroyed.<sup>99</sup>

The Radicals' vehement defense of revolution not only pushed the Radical Party and the PAN into irreconcilable positions, but also isolated the Radical Party from other political currents. In particular, its defense of the legitimacy of violence distinguished the Radical Party from all other opposition forces in the 1890s. The UCN and the *modernistas* were at one with the Radicals in their criticism of the political system. But they concurred with the PAN in regarding virulent rhetoric and armed struggle as inappropriate to the new, modern Argentina. In the 1890s, turning a blind eye to Mitre's previous career, his newspaper *La Nación* joined *Tribuna* in the campaign for peace. The current institutional situation of the country, *La Nación* argued, could be improved only "with a slow and lengthy process, when the adopted principles have penetrated the con-

94 "Conservadores y revolucionarios," Alem also made this distinction clear in his speech in the Senate, 23 July 1891, *DSCS*, p. 368.

95 *Tribuna*, 2 August 1893.

96 *Tribuna*, 28 September 1893.

97 *Tribuna*, 1 January 1891.

98 *Tribuna*, 10 February 1893.

99 "Conservadores y revolucionarios."

sciousness of the people."<sup>100</sup> This does not mean that the UCN gave up violence; indeed, it launched a revolution in the Province of Buenos Aires in July 1893.<sup>101</sup> But the Radical Party was alone in being publicly in favor of the legitimacy of revolution in the press and the National Congress.

The political discourse of the Radicals was not original. The concepts of civic humanism and their deployment of the language of opposition were reminiscent of the English Civil Wars they admired and of the first stages of the U.S. Revolution.<sup>102</sup> Many Radical leaders were well acquainted with Roman history, with Macaulay's *History of England*, and with U.S. history – which they frequently cited to justify their arguments.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the value of civic virtue in ensuring governmental accountability, the danger of the centralization of power in the national executive, the threat posed by materialistic values, and the tendency of luxury to corrupt society and government were ideas that had been extensively debated in Argentina.<sup>104</sup>

The significance of the principles sustained by the Radical Party lay not in their originality, but in the effect they had on the country's politics. They had an immediate impact on the politics of the 1890s as well as longer term implications. The discourse of the Radical Party created a strong antagonism with the government, polarizing Argentina's party system. The Radicals challenged the ideological and political order consolidated in the 1880s, shaking the foundations of the PAN's regime. Against a government discourse which spoke of demobilization, the abandonment of politics, the need for nation-building, and the country's economic development as the top priority, the Radicals launched a discourse based on mobilization, party competition, decentralization of power, and

100 *La Nación*, 26 July 1892. For the open rejection of the Radicals' methods, see also "El Partido Radical," *La Nación*, July 28, 1893.

101 Described below in this chapter.

102 On the tradition of civic humanism and its influence in England, see J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, Princeton, 1975. For the language of opposition used in the English Civil Wars, see Snow, "The Concept of Revolution," 167–174; Robert Ashton, "Tradition and Innovation and the Great Rebellion," in J.G.A. Pocock (ed.), *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1677*, New Jersey, 1980; Ian Hampsher-Monk, "Civic Humanism and Parliamentary Reform: The Case of the Society of the Friends of the People," *The Journal of British Studies*, 2, Spring 1979, pp. 70–89. For the influence of the intellectual tradition of civic humanism in the U.S. Revolution, see the classic B. Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1992, VI, p. 142.

103 See, for example, Alem's speech in the Senate, 20 June 1891, *DSCD*, pp. 266, 276–7; "La causa del orden"; *El Argentino*, 2 August 1892; "La Revolución Cívica Radical," *El Argentino*, 31 July 1893.

104 Analyzed in detail in Botana, *La tradición republicana*, part two; and in his *La libertad política*, pp. 9–33; 197–216. See also Ezequiel Gallo, "Traditions and Political Styles in Argentina," Argentine-U.S. Forum, Maryland, 1989, unpub., p. 12.

the danger of rapid economic development for the country's civic spirit. Whereas the PAN rejected any form of political turmoil, the Radicals publicly defended revolution against an unlawful government. Their differences became irreconcilable. The debate and events of the 1890s consolidated a long-standing tradition in Argentina of deep polarization between government and opposition. For a century, cooperation and conciliation between government and opposition or among different political parties became very difficult, if not virtually impossible.

The Radicals' discourse on revolution had an immediate impact on the 1890s as it set the scene for a decade of violence and turbulence. The Radicals produced it to prepare public opinion for a series of revolutions which they had planned throughout the country and which finally broke out in July, August, and September of 1893. As we have seen, legitimation of the revolts required a critique of the corruption and illegality of the government. In this they were aided by the circumstances of the election of President Sáenz Peña in April 1892, which undermined his legitimacy. On 2 April 1892, a few days before the presidential election, President Pellegrini declared a state of siege, on the grounds that a revolution organized by the Radical Party was imminent.

The events were as follows. The leaders of the Radical Party had given up using the post to communicate between the Central Committee in Buenos Aires and their adherents in the provinces as it could easily be intercepted by the government, and they had had instituted their own courier service.<sup>105</sup> One of these couriers was arrested and a letter from Alem and other compromising documents were found on him. Eventually he confessed to the existence of a conspiracy, specifying every detail. After a Cabinet Council, President Pellegrini declared a state of siege and ordered the arrest of several Radical Party members. Alem, Oscar Liliedal, Rufino Pastor, Celino Castro, Francisco Barroetaveña, Julio Figueroa, Martín Torino, Julio Arraga, Marcelo T. de Alvear, Juan Posse, Miguel A. Paz, Martín Irigoyen, and Víctor Molina were all arrested and held on custody aboard the ship *La Argentina*. Bernardo de Irigoyen was placed under arrest at his farm in Santa Fe; Teófilo Saa, president of the Radical Party in San Luis, was imprisoned, as were nine citizens of the Province of Córdoba, including an infantry officer.

The government claimed that it had frustrated a revolution, the plans of which involved the extensive use of bombs and dynamite and a personal attack on the homes of Pellegrini, Mitre, Roca, Luis Sáenz Peña, and General Levalle. The government also claimed to have found and seized weapons in the committees of San Juan Evangelista and Monserrat in the

105 The following account was taken from Arthur Herbert to Salisbury, 2 April 1892, PRO, of 6/423, and from the *Buenos Ayres Standard*, 3 April 1892.

city of Buenos Aires and had taken possession of the building and archives of the Radical's Central Committee on Cangallo Street. President Pellegrini forbade any telegraphic communication from the city, and prohibited any independent publication of news of the matter – all political news and newspaper editorials were censored by the police.

The Radicals claimed that they were innocent. As the press was forbidden to question the government's procedures, the Radicals distributed a series of pamphlets in the city of Buenos Aires, proclaiming that:

[the government] had clearly simulated the existence of a revolutionary plot portraying bribed ruffians as conspirators, had resorted to skilled calligraphers to forge documents that implicate the prominent men of the campaign of regeneration that has begun with such energy.<sup>106</sup>

Alem and his fellows were to be brought to trial immediately after the first meeting of Congress, which was scheduled for May. At this meeting the Congress was to approve President Pellegrini's action. Despite rumors that very compromising documents would be produced in evidence, doubts began to arise about the legality of the government's imprisonment of Alem and Molina, a senator and a deputy, and about the very existence of the Radical plot.<sup>107</sup>

The state of siege was temporarily raised on election day. The Radicals abstained and Luis Sáenz Peña, backed by the Roca-Mitre agreement, won an uncontested victory. On 27 May, Pellegrini addressed Congress to justify his action in suppressing the Radicals.<sup>108</sup> His case was based on the evidence given by the arrested couriers, the letter from Alem, and on letters found in the committees and private homes of Radical members in the provinces testifying to the existence of a revolutionary plot. But the government could not find weapons or other compromising documents in the city of Buenos Aires, and most of the arrested Radicals refused to testify. Bombs and dynamite were found in the provinces of San Juan and Mendoza, but the government never uncovered when and how the revolution was to take place. The president's case was weak. The general feeling was "that this conspiracy has been exaggerated for political purposes and was nothing more serious than a strong organization of the opposition to

106 "Al Pueblo Argentino," 1892, *Archivo Saldías*, 3-6-3 N. 276, see also in the same archive the pamphlet of 2 April 1892, and the pamphlet of Bernardo de Irigoyen of 3 April 1892, denying the existence of a conspiracy, which the press was not allowed to publish and was, therefore, distributed on the streets.

107 Senators and deputies enjoyed immunity. In spite of Judge Tedín's order to release Alem and Molina, the government kept them under arrest. Herbert to Salisbury, 11 April 1892, *PRO*, of 6/423. See also *The Times*, 6 April 1892, for rising doubts about the legitimacy of the government's repressive actions.

108 *DSCD*, "Comunicaciones oficiales," 27 May 1892, pp. 42-47.



try to obtain a free election, but so far there has been no evidence to show that the Executive Government were justified in the strong action they took."<sup>109</sup> A petition to the government containing 28,000 signatures required it to raise the state of siege and free the Radical prisoners, who had to wait until 14 June for their release.<sup>110</sup>

The whole episode benefited the Radical Party, who had no chance of winning the presidential election and now was perceived by the public as a victim of a government plot. It also provided the Radicals with solid grounds for challenging the legitimacy of President Luis Sáenz Peña. They declared that his election was illegitimate from the start: "the old apostate,"<sup>111</sup> "the wretched old man,"<sup>112</sup> "the incompetent citizen" had become president "turning his back on the most enthusiastic, largest and most popular political party."<sup>113</sup> And during his first months of government, the new president had shown no sign of redeeming his unlawful origins: "not a single law that would signal a new course of action, not a single decree, reform or institution that could show evidence of detailed preparation or that could be interpreted as a step toward the promised regeneration of the country."<sup>114</sup> For the Radicals, Pellegrini's state of siege, "that would forever live on the memory of the country as one its major embarrassments"<sup>115</sup> and the imprisonment of the Radical leaders, not only vitiated Sáenz Peña's election but fully justified the use of violence against the government. On their release in June 1892, the Radicals began secret preparations for a revolt, while the editorials of *El Argentino* prepared public opinion for the turbulent months to come.

### The Revolutions of July 1893

The PAN claimed that Argentina was at a crossroads, poised between survival and dissolution and miraculously saved by the election of Luis Sáenz Peña in April 1892. *Tribuna* described the election as "the triumph of conservative ideas over the anarchic spirit that was disseminated among public opinion, and avoided the turmoil of civil war and its terrifying consequences."<sup>116</sup> However, the notion that the new presidency would put an end to political uncertainty soon proved illusory. The presidency of Luis Sáenz Peña was the most unstable of the late nineteenth century. In his twenty-six months in office, between October 1892 and January 1895, Sáenz Peña governed with twelve different Cabinets, repressed several

109 Herbert to Salisbury, 29 May 1892, PRO, FO 6/423. *The Economist*, 7 May 1892, and *South American Journal*, 7 May 1892, expressed similar opinions.

110 *The Times*, 30 May 1892. 111 *El Argentino*, 26 August 1892.

112 *Ibid.*, 28 February 1893. 113 *Ibid.*, 2 January 1892. 114 *Ibid.*

115 "Decreto de estado de sitio," *El Argentino*, 1 January 1893. 116 *Tribuna*, 10 January 1892.

revolts, resorted to eight federal interventions (a record that stood until 1916), and imposed several months of state of siege. Barely four months into his mandate, the independent press predicted that "the old gentleman himself won't get even half-way through his legal term of office."<sup>117</sup>

The instability of Sáenz Peña's administration was largely due to the rapid collapse of the PAN—*mitrista* alliance that had made his election possible and to the turmoil caused by the Radical Party. In October 1892, a few days before the new president took office, the alliance was dissolved on the grounds that, apart from preventing Roque Sáenz Peña from becoming president, both parties involved felt they had not gained many other benefits.<sup>118</sup> The UCN was badly damaged by the agreement with the PAN. In most provinces, PAN members refused to draw up mixed electoral lists with the *mitristas* or share power with them.<sup>119</sup> The *mitristas* felt betrayed by a coalition which did not directly benefit them. In the city of Buenos Aires, senior UCN members, including all the local committee presidents, left the party.<sup>120</sup> By August 1892, the Junta Ejecutiva Nacional of the UCN had been disbanded and the party's structures had dissolved; its members refused to attend committee sessions or pay their membership fees.<sup>121</sup> The press declared the UCN dead as a political force; it was kept alive only by the regular appointment of UCN members to the Cabinet.<sup>122</sup>

The PAN had also suffered a significant setback. If anyone believed that the election of Sáenz Peña was the "greatest political triumph of General Roca's career,"<sup>123</sup> subsequent events soon disabused them. In Congress, Roca competed against a *modernista* for the presidency of the Senate in October 1892 and lost.<sup>124</sup> This was a significant defeat. It closed the door on a possible second term as president of the Republic and gave Roca clear warning that he had not succeeded in reconstructing his political base.<sup>125</sup> It was also public testimony to the *modernistas'* resolve and influence in combating Roca and of the *cívicos'* hostility to their recent electoral partner.

117 *South American Journal*, 11 March (31 January) 1893. The same opinion was also expressed by *The Economist*, 28 January 1893.

118 *Tribuna*, 13 October 1892.

119 Oroño to Roca, 2 January 1892; Arosa to Roca, 18 January 1892, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 66.

120 The UCN had already lost 15 members of the National Committee in January (*La Prensa*, 12 January 1892), and losses increased in June (*La Prensa*, 4 June 1892).

121 For the drawbacks suffered by the UCN, see Pedro Argerich to Próspero García, 17 March and 29 August 1892, *Archivo Próspero García*, 20-3-12.

122 *The Economist*, 21 May and 23 July 1892. For the *mitrista* participation in the Cabinets of Sáenz Peña, see Gallo, "Un quinquenio," p. 225.

123 *The Economist*, 23 July 1892.

124 For analyses of the votes and its implications, see *Tribuna*, 2 and 3 September 1892.

125 According to the National Constitution, the president of the Senate would become president of the country in case of death or resignation of both the president and vice-president.

More significant, the *modernistas* began to take the first steps toward a split from the PAN and the creation of a party of their own.<sup>126</sup>

The breakdown of the coalition left President Sáenz Peña without a political base. Instead of attempting to gain the support of a political party, the president attempted to govern with the support of politicians of many different political complexions. The uncertainty created by the breakdown of the PAN-UCN alliance was exacerbated by the president's frequent changes of cabinet and the varying political allegiances of cabinet ministers. Sáenz Peña's cabinets included *roquistas*, *mitristas*, independents, and even *modernistas*.<sup>127</sup> The president's unpredictability fostered intense competition among the parties; they were anxious for any chance to exercise power. As a contemporary observer put it, "the radicals, *roquistas*, *mitristas*, *modernistas*, and the old Juárez party are all fighting for supremacy under a neutral government which can at present only carry measures by temporary alliances."<sup>128</sup>

In July 1893, during one of the frequent Cabinet crises, it was thought that the president was ready to resign.<sup>129</sup> However, Sáenz Peña again surprised everyone by asking Aristóbulo del Valle to form a new cabinet. Del Valle, one of the main organizers of the original UC and one of the leaders of the July Revolution of 1890, had retired from politics in 1891 because he objected to the division of the UC into UCN and UCR. Offered the chance to form a cabinet, del Valle attempted to reunite the two branches of the ex-UC by offering ministries to radicals and *mitristas*. The radicals rejected the offer; the *mitristas* accepted it.<sup>130</sup> Del Valle's Cabinet was finally composed of a mixture of ex-UC members: himself at the Ministry of War, Mariano Demaría at the Ministry of Finance, his close friend Lucio V. López, now a *modernista*, at the Ministry of the Interior; while two *mitristas*, Valentín Virasoro and Enrique Quintana, occupied the Ministries of Foreign Relations and Justice, respectively. The impact of these appointments was tremendous. As a contemporary put it, "the *modernistas* are enraged – the *roquistas* watch, the *mitristas* appear likely to split up, and altogether there is anxiety to see what the first steps of the new government will be."<sup>131</sup> Del Valle's first steps involved dismantling two of the pillars on which the PAN's political system had been based: arms and financial patronage. A law had been passed in 1880 forbidding the arming

126 *La Prensa*, 1 November 1892; *Tribuna*, 1 November 1892.

127 For the different political affiliation of Sáenz Peña's Cabinet and its frequent changes, see Gallo, "Un quinquenio," p. 225. Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 149–152.

128 "Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro" (no names), 4 November 1892, *BOLSA*, D6/9.

129 *La Nación*, 2 July 1893.

130 For the offer to the radicals and their deliberations, see *El Argentino*, 5 July 1893; *La Prensa*, 5, 12 July 1893; *Tribuna*, 5 July 1893.

131 Rosario to Montevideo (no names), 7 July 1893. *BOLSA*, D6/10.

of provincial militias, but this had generally been ignored.<sup>132</sup> Determined to put an end to the use of local armies for political purposes, del Valle ordered the disarmament of the provinces of Buenos Aires and Corrientes. It was rumored that this policy would also be extended to the remaining provinces.<sup>133</sup> At the same time, Minister of Finance Mariano Demaría ordered an investigation of the fraudulent accounts of the Banco Hipotecario de la Provincia de Buenos Aires. It was known that other provincial banks would also be investigated.<sup>134</sup>

Aristóbulo del Valle's new Cabinet and its first actions were decisive for the plans of the Radical Party. In November 1892 the radicals arranged a party convention in the Politeama Theater in Buenos Aires with representatives from the provinces to discuss future policies.<sup>135</sup> The discussions took place behind closed doors; the party's resolutions remained secret.<sup>136</sup> The convention ended in a public demonstration on the streets of the city; sympathetic estimates put the number of participants at around 10,000.<sup>137</sup> The demonstration was addressed by Bernardo de Irigoyen, who stated that the Radical convention had decided not to recognize the legitimacy of President Sáenz Peña and that the party maintained the principles of the original meeting of 1 September 1889 concerning the legitimacy of revolutionary action.<sup>138</sup>

In their efforts to organize a revolution against the government, the radicals were aided by widespread disaffection within the Army and Navy. The discontent that had led sections of the armed forces to take part in the July Revolution of 1890 had not been alleviated. In February 1891, rumors of disaffection were so intense that the Army published an official document reminding its personnel that their duty "ought to be limited to

132 See Chapter 1.

133 According to the National Constitution (art. 108); the provinces were forbidden to maintain their own armed forces. This prohibition was reinforced by legislation in 1880 soon before the revolution of the Province of Buenos Aires led by Carlos Tejedor. Despite this, it was known that the governors of the provinces armed their guards and used them for their own benefit, particularly at election times. See Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 153-4.

134 A decree for the disarmament for the Province of Corrientes was issued on 12 July (*La Prensa*), and a similar one for the Province of Santa Fe soon followed, *La Nación*, 28 July 1893. Demaría was also preparing an intervention in the Ministry of Finance and in the Provincial Bank of Santa Fe to investigate frauds under previous administrations, *La Nación*, 28 July 1893.

135 For a list of the members present in the Convention, see *La Prensa*, 12 November 1892.

136 *La Prensa*, 17 November 1892. 137 *La Prensa*, 21 November 1892.

138 The convention had been attended by the leaders of the revolutions to come and, therefore, it is likely that revolutionary plans were discussed during the secret meetings. What is evident is that Alem had instructed the representatives from the provinces to reorganize the party into political clubs whose main function should be the recruitment of men ready to fight. See *La Prensa*, 12 November 1892, and L.R. Fors, 1893 *Levantamiento, revolución y desarme de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires 1895, pp. 7-8.



putting the weapons of the Nation at the service of the Constitutional authorities . . . saving the country from civil war."<sup>139</sup> Discontent increased when the government refused promotion to officers who had participated in the July 1890 revolution. This was in breach of undertakings made when the revolutionaries surrendered.<sup>140</sup> Despite the government's security precautions, a few weeks before Luis Sáenz Peña assumed the presidency, a revolutionary plot was discovered in the military camp of Santa Catalina, a few miles from the city of Buenos Aires.<sup>141</sup> From the columns of *El Argentino*, the radicals encouraged this disaffection with comments such as: "the national army was not founded or sustained by the people to become the people's own executioner."<sup>142</sup>

The appointment of del Valle's Cabinet advanced the radicals' plans for revolution.<sup>143</sup> The radicals thought that del Valle, a member of the ex-UC and a prominent anti-*roquista*, would sympathize with their cause. July witnessed intense political activity in Buenos Aires, with a campaign for elections to the Senate scheduled for the 23rd and a large demonstration at the end of the month to celebrate the anniversary of the revolution of 1890. In the midst of this activity the radicals' revolution broke out simultaneously in the provinces of Santa Fe, San Luis, and Buenos Aires on the last days of July. Each revolution was distinct. In Santa Fe, where they lacked a substantial party organization, the radicals took advantage of widespread dissatisfaction with Governor Cafferata. In San Luis, the revolution was a local affair without much relation to the Radical Party of the federal capital. In the Province of Buenos Aires, the revolution displayed an impressive level of organization. The following pages offer a brief analysis of each.

The Province of Santa Fe was Argentina's leading grain-producing province, thanks to the rapid expansion of the agricultural colonies after 1856.<sup>144</sup> Foreigners made up a large percentage of these colonies: In 1865, 42 percent of the inhabitants were foreign by birth. Since 1868, the province had been governed by the Partido Autonomista, which had experienced major internal dissension after the death of its leader, Simón de Iriondo, in 1883. The Radical Party did not have a formal party structure in Santa Fe province before the revolt, though it could rely on the support

139 "Weekly Herald," 28 February 1891, reprinted in *PRO*, 6/421.

140 *La Prensa*, 1 January 1892; *El Argentino*, 26 December 1892.

141 Buenos Aires to Rosario, 24 September 1892, *BOLSA*, D. 6/9. The military plot was repressed by Levalle, Minister of War; 19 officials were arrested. See *Tribuna*, 22 September 1892.

142 *El Argentino*, 11 January 1893; see also *El Argentino*, 5 and 12 January 1893.

143 For the preparations, see Fournier, "Episodios olvidados," *MyD*, Vol. III, p. 363.

144 For the agriculture expansion of Santa Fe, see E. Gallo, *La Pampa gringa: La colonización agrícola en Santa Fe (1870-1895)*, Buenos Aires, 1983, pp. 63-339; Gallo, *Farmers in Revolt*, pp. 5-10.

of a few inhabitants of the city of Rosario and a few political clubs.<sup>145</sup> But Santa Fe afforded fertile ground for revolt. In November 1891, Governor Cafferata, facing large external and domestic debts, had imposed a tax on wheat exports that provoked violent protest, particularly in the colonies. The protests grew and, in February 1893, armed revolts took place in Humbolt, where farmers had refused to pay the tax. When the unrest recurred throughout July, the Radical Party took advantage to launch their revolt.<sup>146</sup>

The action began in Rosario on the morning of 30 July. During the previous night, a Remington and 100 bullets were distributed to each of twenty-five young radicals, who were ordered to meet on the Plaza de Mayo and attack police and government buildings.<sup>147</sup> The revolutionary junta was composed of members of the incipient Radical Party organization in the province: Mariano Candioti, Jose Chiossa, Albano Zamora, Agustín Landó, and twenty-four-year-old Lisandro de la Torre, whose actions during the revolt won widespread admiration in the party. The revolutionary leaders estimated that, once the revolution began, the farmers in the colonies would also revolt. They were right: About 2,000 colonists joined the radical revolution.<sup>148</sup> After taking the city of Rosario, the revolutionaries went by train to Santa Fe where Governor Cafferata had marshalled 1,800 men, combining policemen, volunteers, and troops.<sup>149</sup> On 1 August, after intense street fighting, the revolutionary forces triumphed.<sup>150</sup>

The events in the Province of San Luis were more the act of a courageous little group than a revolution. One of the more backward provinces of the country, San Luis had been governed since 1853 by a tightly knit oligarchy. The internal politics of the province shifted slightly in 1890, when Jacinto Videla was elected to the governorship by a coalition involving the four political factions in the province: the *mitristas*, *roquistas*, radicals, and *modernistas*.<sup>151</sup> The radicals had achieved a high degree of organization in 1890 when Teófilo Sáa founded the Unión Cívica del Pueblo. In September 1890, Sáa and Alem had discussed the possibility of a revolt

145 M.J. Wilde, "Los orígenes del radicalismo santafesino (1893-1896)," *Todo es Historia*, Año XVIII, November 1985, N. 233, p. 75.

146 Gallo, *Farmers in Revolt*, pp. 38-47.

147 *La Nación*, 31 July 1893.

148 Gallo, *Farmers in Revolt*, p. 49.

149 For the details of the street fighting and the revolt in the colonies, see *La Prensa*, 30 July 1893; Etchepareborda, *Tres Revoluciones*, pp. 163-168.

150 The estimates of the casualties of *La Prensa* (1 August 1893) was of 21 dead and 62 wounded, whereas *La Nación* (2 August 1893) counted 100 dead and 300 wounded.

151 R.S. Follari, "Teófilo Sáa y la revolución de 1893 en San Luis," *Separata del Boletín N. 5 de la Junta de Historia de San Luis*, San Luis, 1975, pp. 20-21.

in the province, but nothing had come of these conversations despite Saa's subsequent complaints to his Buenos Aires colleagues that he was being harassed by the governor and his party was subject to persecution.<sup>152</sup> When the revolution finally broke out in the early hours of 29 July 1893, the authorities of the Radical Party in Buenos Aires knew nothing about it until it was reported in the press. The radicals of San Luis took advantage of Governor Videla's increasing difficulty with the legislature, where the coalition parties were at loggerheads.<sup>153</sup>

The revolutionary leaders were Teófilo Saa; his cousin Hipólito; the deputy headmaster of the local school, Nicolás Yofre; a school teacher, Norberto Quiroga; and Rosario and Víctor Videla, brother and cousin of the governor.<sup>154</sup> The headquarters of the revolutionaries was the local school, most of whose staff and some of whose students belonged to the Radical Party. At 2 a.m. not more than thirty revolutionaries attacked the police station, which was located next to the governor's house. The station was defended by thirteen policeman whose resistance was short-lived – the police chief fled in his underwear and hid. After taking the police station, the revolutionaries broke down the front door of Videla's house. "The wife of the governor tells me," the reporter of *La Nación* telegraphed to Buenos Aires, "that when the revolutionaries entered into the house, two of them pointed their guns to her chest demanding her to tell them where was the governor. One of them, she says, fired into the bedroom without hurting anyone."<sup>155</sup> The governor, his Finance Minister, and a few deputies were imprisoned in the police station after the jails had been emptied and the city's criminals freed. Once behind bars, the governor was forced to resign and a revolutionary government composed of Teófilo Saa, his cousin Marcelino Ojeda, and the headmaster of the local school, Eulalio Astudillo, took over.

Of the three radical revolutions of July, the one in the Province of Buenos Aires was the largest in terms of numbers and the best planned.<sup>156</sup> It was organized by a group of members of the Radical Committee of the Province, most of whom resided in the city of Buenos Aires, together

152 Lucero to A. Saldías, 21 April 1893, *Archivo Saldías*, 3-6-3, N. 276.

153 The legislature of San Luis only had one chamber of 18 members, which was composed of 9 *roquistas*, 8 *mitristas* coalesced with the *modernistas*, and 1 radical. *La Nación* 30 July 1893.

154 The following account has been taken from *La Nación*, the only newspaper with a correspondent in the city of San Luis. Slightly different accounts can be found in Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 155–159, and in Follari, "Teófilo Saa," pp. 35–38.

155 *La Nación*, 29 July 1893.

156 The following is only a brief account of the revolution of Buenos Aires. Details can be found in Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 175–200; P. Rotger, *Historia de la revolución radical del año 1893*, Buenos Aires, 1913, pp. 121–141; L. Sommariva, *Historia de las intervenciones*, pp. 217–219; A. Espil, *Las revoluciones de 1893 y don Julio A. Costa gobernador de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 1964; Fors, 1893.

with around twenty members of the army. Hipólito Yrigoyen was the political leader of the revolution and Juan Carlos Belgrano its military chief. Yrigoyen had been in charge of party's organization in the province since 1891, and was president of the Radical Committee of the Province of Buenos Aires. Belgrano had been a member of the Partido Autonomista in the 1870s but had not played a major role in politics since then.

The government's decree ordering the disarmament of the Province of Buenos Aires had come as a devastating blow to Governor Eduardo Costa, who was also facing fierce opposition in the local legislature.<sup>157</sup> With the new national government openly opposed to him, and forced to surrender 1,800 weapons, Costa had been significantly weakened. By the last days of July, it had become an open secret that the radicals were organizing a revolution in the province.<sup>158</sup> Governor Costa concentrated his men in La Plata, the province's capital, and ordered a search for members of the Radical Party in Luján and Rodríguez, thinking that the revolutionaries would meet at the local *estancias* of Bernardo de Irigoyen and Enrique Fernández and then proceed to La Plata.<sup>159</sup>

But the radicals had anticipated Costa's plan and distributed their men by train throughout the province, launching simultaneous attacks against the local authorities rather than concentrating their forces at La Plata. Of the eighty-two departments into which the province was administratively divided, local uprisings broke out in eighty.<sup>160</sup> It is difficult to assess the numbers of the revolutionary force. Initially around 100 men traveled from the city of Buenos Aires, but as they conquered the departments, they were joined by several thousand more, with estimates varying between 5,000 and 6,000 men.<sup>161</sup>

At the same time, the UCN also started their own revolution in the province. Preparations had begun only a week before and were hastened by the radicals' uprising.<sup>162</sup> The UCN revolution was led by General Julio Campos, military leader of the July 1890 revolution, who led some 2,000 men concentrating in the southern departments of the province while the radicals attacked in the north and west.<sup>163</sup> The UCN revolutionary

157 *La Nación*, 11 July 1893.

158 Funes to Roca, 13 June 1893, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 67; *The Economist*, 2 September (28 July) 1893.

159 Fors, 1893, p. 20.

160 For the lists of radicals who traveled from Buenos Aires, their respective missions, and their actions, see Fors, 1893, pp. 7–8, 19, 28–56, 144–187, 190–194; Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 178–194.

161 *La Prensa*, 8 August 1893; *Tribuna*, 17 August 1893.

162 *La Nación*, 23 July 1893; *La Prensa*, 9 August 1893; Fors, 1893, p. 309.

163 For the revolution of the UCN, see Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 194–5; Fors, 1893, pp. 57–86; *La Prensa*, 30, 31 July, 5 August 1893; *La Nación*, 30, 31 July 1893.



manifesto was remarkably similar to that of the radicals, stating that "the institutional regime has long been disappeared," "free suffrage has been substituted by electoral fraud," and "the insolent-one-man-rule that reigns with no control, had disturbed and erased any concept of constitutional government," and, therefore, the revolution was "a patriotic duty and a moral and political necessity."<sup>164</sup> However, any connection between the two revolutions was confined to the similarity of their manifestos. Their actions were independent and the radicals rejected any proposals to merge with the UCN's revolutionary forces.<sup>165</sup> The radical revolution was significantly larger than that of the UCN and commanded most of the attention in the press. Governor Costa, unable to suppress the revolution, resigned on 5 August. It was expected that Hipólito Yrigoyen, the head of the radicals' organization in the province, would become the new governor, but he declined and General Belgrano was appointed provisional governor of the province.

During their short existence, the provisional governments of San Luis, Santa Fe, and Buenos Aires enacted similar measures. They replaced the old authorities throughout the provinces, reorganized the judiciary, declared the electoral registers null and void, and set up commissions to draw up new registers.<sup>166</sup> In Santa Fe, this was followed by an investigation of banking policies, the sale of public land by the previous administration, and the promise to repeal the unpopular grain tax. In Buenos Aires, new directors of the Banco de la Provincia and Banco Hipotecario were appointed.

In the meantime, a *coup de palais* had forced del Valle to resign. In Congress, the PAN, *modernistas*, and *mitristas* had joined forces against him, and President Sáenz Peña, in another unexpected move, also withdrew his support. After del Valle's resignation, Congress's first step was to approve federal interventions in the three provinces.<sup>167</sup> The radical provisional governments of Santa Fe and San Luis unsuccessfully appealed to the Supreme Court.<sup>168</sup> The intervention took place in the first days of September 1893; the rebel governments were replaced with no resistance.

164 "Al pueblo de la Provincia de Buenos Aires," *La Nación*, 31 July 1893.

165 For the independent revolutionary actions of both parties, see Fors, 1893, p. 120; Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 192, 199, *La Prensa*, 5 August 1893.

166 For the measures of the provisional government of San Luis, see Follari, "Teófilo Sáa," pp. 37-38; for those of Santa Fe, see Gallo, *Farmers in Revolt*, p. 54 and MyD, Vol. VIII, pp. 156-158. For those in the Province of Buenos Aires, see Fors, 1893, pp. 358, 400.

167 For the details surrounding del Valle's resignation, see Fors, 1893, pp. 320-22, 401-406; Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 200-207; Sommariva, *Historia de las intervenciones*, pp. 218-224.

168 For the texts of the appeals, see MyD, Vol. VII, pp. 160-162. The implications of the Supreme Court refusal of the appeal were discussed in *El Argentino*, 18 and 21 August 1893; *La Nación*, 20, 21, and 31 August 1893.

## The Revolutions of August and September 1893

Luis Sáenz Peña replaced del Valle's Cabinet with one of *mitrista* tendencies led by Manuel Quintana.<sup>169</sup> A renowned lawyer and leader of the UC, Quintana had already been, for two brief months, Sáenz Peña's first minister of the interior following the president's accession in October 1892. Quintana's main objective when he took office on 12 August was to impose order. For this, he relied on the unified support of *mistristas*, *roquistas*, and *modernistas*, who had quickly approved federal interventions in the three provinces where revolutions had taken place. Quintana acted promptly and firmly. Besides intervening in San Luis, Santa Fe, and Buenos Aires, he called out the National Guard (the civil reserve of 40,000 men), placed the whole country under a state of siege, and prohibited the press from publishing any political news not supplied by his ministry. Several newspapers were banned. From August to November, *El Argentino* protested against these measures by printing a black bar in the blank space of its editorial column.

The government's harsh measures did not deter the radicals from planning and launching further revolutionary uprisings. Throughout August, plans matured for a nationwide revolt, though serious insurrections finally broke out only in the provinces of Corrientes, Tucumán, and Santa Fe.<sup>170</sup> The ambience in which these revolts took place was very different from that of the July revolutions. The August and September uprisings were not accompanied by stormy public proclamations justifying the revolutions, or *El Argentino's* virulent antigovernmental rhetoric. In fact, *El Argentino* denied the existence of a national revolutionary movement,

169 The other four ministries were filled by E. Costa as minister of justice, J. Terry as minister of finance, Luis M. Campos as minister of war, and V. Virasoro as minister of foreign affairs.

170 That the revolutions that finally broke out were part of an unsuccessful national movement was later revealed by Alem in his official statement to the federal judge once the revolution had ended, and was repeated in letters written by him while he was imprisoned in Rosario. However, further revolutionary outbreaks that would have accompanied that of Santa Fe failed to take place, and Alem attributed the failure in Santa Fe to the lack of support from other provinces. Alem's statement in Court was reported by *La Nación*, 28 October 1893. For his letters while in prison, see Alem to Juan Carlos Belgrano, 12 October 1893, in *Documentos Relativos a la Revolución de 1893 en la Provincia de Buenos Aires*, 7-2-20 N. 4; "Cartas escritas por el Doctor Alem desde la cárcel del Rosario dirigidas a un político radical del norte," in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, pp. 223-225. *The Economist*, 28 October (27 September) 1893, also affirmed that the "the plan was to effect risings in all the provinces at the same time, so as to divide the national forces but failed for lack of organization." This was also the official view of the government. See *Memoria del Ministerio del Interior ante el Congreso Nacional 1893*, Buenos Aires, 1894, p. 11. The *Memoria* was written by Minister Manuel Quintana. For Alem's sense of betrayal for the lack of support from other provinces, see his letter of 1 November 1893, reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, pp. 225-226.

claimed no part in the revolutions of Corrientes and Tucumán, and did not report the uprising in Santa Fe.<sup>171</sup> The censorship of the press, the need for surprise, and the fact that (as it later emerged) the higher ranks of the Radical Party were divided about the expediency of further insurrections may account for the newspaper's silence.

The revolution in Corrientes broke out on 14 August. Corrientes was divided between an *autonomista* north and a *mitrista* south. The radicals had neither party organization nor popular support in the province. Their link with Corrientes was through General Manuel Mantilla, the leader of the revolt. Mantilla had joined the UC in 1889, taken part in the July revolution, and after the division of the UC had sided with the UCN. But he had been expelled from the UCN in June 1891 and joined the radicals in 1893. Early that year, Mantilla had secretly approached Alem with a view to mounting a revolt in Corrientes, and Alem had responded by sending arms and money. In exchange, Mantilla was asked to coordinate his revolt with those that the radicals were organizing in other provinces.<sup>172</sup> About 7,000 armed men joined the revolt, which succeeded in overthrowing the government, but surrendered as soon as Congress approved a federal intervention in the province.<sup>173</sup>

In Tucumán, where the radicals lacked any significant influence, they took advantage of a local conflict between the *mitrista* Governor Próspero García and the electoral college of the province to launch their revolt. The college was due to elect a new governor on 16 August.<sup>174</sup> Governor García knew that the political composition of the college meant that his favored candidate would not be elected, and he sought to delay the meeting until 31 August, when a third of the college was to be renewed and it could be packed with García loyalists. García therefore decreed that the college could not hold an election while the country was under a state of siege. The electors discerned the ploy and appealed to the national government for permission to proceed. The government ordered García to let the election take place; he, however, refused and used the police to prevent the meeting. The college then requested federal intervention.

The radicals were not involved in this dispute, as they had no seats in the college or any significant influence in the province. But taking advantage of the widespread dissatisfaction generated by the affair, they launched

171 *El Argentino*, 4 and 5 September 1893. The first news on Santa Fe was of the imprisonment of Alem and Candiotti on 29 October 1893.

172 See Gregorio Torres to Roca, 19 January 1893; and Antonio M. Guiñol to Roca, 21 February 1893, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 67. Etchepareborda, *Tres Revoluciones*, pp. 208–209.

173 Etchepareborda, *Tres Revoluciones*, pp. 209–211, and Gallo, "Un quinqueno," p. 231.

174 For the revolution in Tucumán, see Sommariva, *Historia de las Intervenciones*, pp. 228, 229; Etchepareborda, *Tres Revoluciones*, pp. 211–212; C. Páez de la Torre (h), "La revolución radical de Tucumán en 1893," *Todo es Historia*, 1984, N. 203, pp. 48–62.

an attack on the main police station at 4:30 a.m. on 7 September. Estimates of their force varied. *La Nación* claimed fifty men had attacked the penitentiary, which was defended by twelve guards; *La Prensa* estimated 150 rebels and 100 guards. In any event, the penitentiary was quickly taken by the radicals, who thus came into possession of 250 Remingtons, 10,000 rounds of ammunition, and two cannons. They then seized the other police stations, from which they obtained more ammunition.<sup>175</sup> Governor García entrenched himself in the Cabildo with 400 men. The battle continued for the next three days while further outbreaks took place throughout the province.<sup>176</sup>

The Minister of the Interior, Manuel Quintana, reacted by sending the Eleventh Line Battalion to the Province, with the confusing instructions that they were to defend public buildings without intervening in the conflict. Once in Tucumán, the soldiers revolted and joined the radicals. This combined force easily defeated Governor García, and on 15 September, a provisional government was set up. García appealed to the national government for federal intervention and Quintana's initially hesitant measures now gave way to firm action. Quintana sent an army of 1,200 men led by the highly regarded General Bosch with instructions to overthrow the revolutionary government.<sup>177</sup> Carlos Pellegrini joined Bosch's expedition, whose strength quickly persuaded the rebels to surrender.

The revolution in the province of Santa Fe broke out on 24 September. There were significant differences between the uprising of September and that of July. The July revolt had been organized by the local radical leaders; this time Leandro Alem himself took part, aided in planning and execution by important Radical Party members from the city of Buenos Aires. The July revolt had been a purely civilian uprising, whereas in September the Army and Navy played a significant role and the civilian support, particularly from the colonies, was smaller. The government was aware of the revolutionary plan and had taken countermeasures. All newspapers and communications were suspended for a week, several radical leaders in the cities of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe were arrested, and others left the country after they had been advised to do so.<sup>178</sup> None of these measures prevented the outbreak of the revolt. The armed conflicts took place: in Santa Fe, capital of the province, in Rosario, its most important city and the commercial center, while naval combats occurred on the Tigre and Paraná rivers. In military strength, the September revolution

175 *La Nación*, 12 September 1893; *La Prensa*, 8 September 1893.

176 Etchepareborda, *Tres Revoluciones*, p. 213; *La Nación*, 13 September 1893.

177 For the details of this expedition, see *La Nación*, 3 October 1893; Etchepareborda, *Tres Revoluciones*, pp. 214–215.

178 *South American Journal*, 28 October (30 September) 1893.



in the Province of Santa Fe was the largest-scale military event of that year.<sup>179</sup>

In the city of Santa Fe, the revolution began on Sunday, 24 September.<sup>180</sup> A faction of the army (the Third Line Battalion) revolted and liberated the radical leaders who had remained in prison since their defeat in July. Mariano Candiotti took over the rebel leadership. At first numbering no more than thirty men, the insurrectionary forces soon increased to 500, partly thanks to the incorporation of colonists who had arrived by train on the morning of the 25th. A fierce battle continued until the 27th, when the loyalists received reinforcements from the national government and Candiotti surrendered.<sup>181</sup>

The rebels had better luck in the city of Rosario where the revolution was led by Alem, Oscar Liliedal, and Lisandro de la Torre, who had arrived from Buenos Aires days before the outbreak bringing arms and money. Mobilizing some 6,000 men, the radicals took over the city in a few hours on 25 September. Two days later, the crew of the gunboat *Los Andes*, sent by the national government to deliver arms to the Province of Entre Ríos, revolted and delivered the arms to the radicals in Rosario.<sup>182</sup> On the 27th, two loyal gunboats arrived in the port of Rosario in pursuit of *Los Andes*; after a fierce exchange of fire on the river, the rebel boat was damaged and abandoned.<sup>183</sup>

Alarmed at the political convulsions engulfing the country, President Sáenz Peña turned to Roca. He appointed him commander-in-chief of the Army and gave him a free hand to deal with the rebels. Roca's tactic was to make an impressive show of military force in the face of which the rebels would rapidly surrender. He called out the National Guard throughout the Republic (in theory some 40,000 strong, though only a small proportion of the Guard was used on the battlefield) and he put himself and the most prestigious generals of the country in command.<sup>184</sup> Generals Levalle and Fotheringham were sent to Córdoba to form an army with the united forces of the provinces of Córdoba, Catamarca, and Santiago del Estero, a total of 2,500 men.<sup>185</sup> General Bosch and Pellegrini, still in Tucumán, were

179 Gallo, "Un quinquenio," p. 232.

180 For details on the revolution in Santa Fe, see *La Nación*, 3 October 1893; *La Prensa*, 1 October 1893; Etchepareborda, *Tres Revoluciones*, pp. 216–221; A. Fournier, "Como se produjo la revolución en la ciudad de Santa Fé," in *MyD*, Vol. III, pp. 219–222. Fournier was brother-in-law of Candiotti and was a participant in the events.

181 *La Prensa*, 5 October 1893; *La Nación* 3 October 1893.

182 For the events in Rosario, see *La Nación*, 3 October 1893; Pakenham to London, 22 November 1893, PRO, FO 118/226; Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 222–230.

183 For details of the naval combat, see Parkenham to London, 22 November 1893, PRO, FO 118/226.

184 *The Economist*, 11 November 1893. 185 *La Nación*, 3 October 1893.

ordered to Rosario, while General Ayala, after recruiting 3,500 men in Entre Ríos, was sent to Santa Fe. Roca himself commanded a smaller group of 100 men.<sup>186</sup>

Faced with these large forces, Alem, who was holding the last bastion of the rebels in Rosario, surrendered. He later explained:

I was surrounded by six army battalions who were approaching me with formidable artillery, and I was threatened that the city would be bombarded. I took an extreme and desperate resolution; at every moment I was receiving the request of the principal men of this city (Rosario) not to sacrifice it, not to waste this brilliant youth, the backbone of Radicalism, and to reserve it for another, more opportune, time, given that the national revolution was lost and that everything that was remaining was this small number of patriots, highly animated and wilful, but who did not even know how to march.<sup>187</sup>

The national government was determined to establish strict discipline throughout the country and, this time, meted out harsh sentences to the rebels. Alem and Candioti, together with 800 Radicals, were imprisoned in Rosario. After two weeks, the majority of the prisoners were released, but forty leaders, including Alem, were transported to the gunboat *Rosetti* where they awaited trial for sedition by a civil court. The military personnel received harsh sentences. The naval officers of *Los Andes* were sentenced to death by court-martial; this was later commuted to twenty years' imprisonment.<sup>188</sup> For the duration of the state of siege, the press was forbidden to discuss the government's measures. A number of radicals from Salta were jailed for sending Alem a telegram of support.<sup>189</sup> Alem had won a seat in the Senate in July but was now banned from taking it. These were strict measures by the standard of the time in a country where rebels hardly ever faced any penalty. Tejedor, Campos, and Alem himself, for example, had been set free after mounting large insurrections in 1880 and 1890.<sup>190</sup>

The revolutions of July and September 1893 were the other side of the coin of the public discourse the Radical Party had launched since its foundation. They proved that the radical leaders were ready to practice what they preached. When they planned the uprisings the leaders of the Radical Party believed that, faced with simultaneous revolts in the provinces, the national government would resign. Under the claim that revolution was legitimate when conducted against an unlawful authority, thousands of

186 *La Prensa*, 1 October 1893.

187 Alem to J.C. Belgrano, 12 October 1893, *Documentos*, 7-20-3, N. 4.

188 *La Nación*, 18 October 1893.

189 *La Prensa*, 13 November 1893.

190 This was pointed out by the manager of the Bank of London in Buenos Aires, 28 September 1893, *BOLSA*, D6/10.

men risked their lives by taking arms against their government. It is hard to envisage which direction a national government in the hands of the Radical Party would have taken given that the party's rhetoric was mostly concentrated on what the party rejected, rather than on what alternatives they proposed. However, from the actions of the short-lived provisional governments of the provinces of Santa Fe, San Luis, and Buenos Aires, it can be concluded that the first steps would have been directed toward depriving the official party of some of the tools it used to gain and maintain itself in power: electoral fraud and financial patronage.

The revolutions of 1893 and the radicals' defeat had a series of immediate consequences on the country's politics. As people noted at the time, one of the main results was the consolidation of the PAN and the restoration of Roca's predominance. Fears of a total breakdown of the constitutional order had made *roquistas* and *modernistas* "finally resolve to kiss, make up and unite to recover their former political supremacy in the affairs of the state."<sup>191</sup> The outbreaks also appeased long-standing government worries on one score: Disaffection in the Army and Navy was much less widespread than had been supposed.<sup>192</sup> However, the most surprising consequence of the revolutions was that the Radical Party, far from losing support as a result of the military defeats, seemed to have gained ground. As we see in the next chapter, the Radical Party won the congressional elections of 1894 in the city of Buenos Aires in February, and those of February and March 1894 in the Province of Buenos Aires. As a result, the radicals achieved significant representation in Congress for the first time. Furthermore, the September revolution in Santa Fe was the last attempt made by the radicals until 1905 to achieve their aims through armed struggle. After September 1893, the party changed its strategy from revolution to electoral competition, and this tactical shift produced a significant transformation in the party's image, identity, leadership, and fortunes.

191 *The Economist*, 23 December (22 November) 1893.

192 *The Economist*, 11 November (12 October) 1893.

## The Radicals in Action: Part II

The successive military defeats experienced in the revolutions of 1893 marked a turning point in the history of the Radical Party. Its revolutionary rhetoric gave way to a softer language. *El Argentino*, the vigorous mouthpiece of the UCR, was replaced by *El Tiempo*, a moderate newspaper, and the party concentrated its efforts on electoral politics rather than revolution, emphasizing economics above politics as the party's main banner of campaign. The authority of the senior party leaders was challenged. In the aftermath of the revolutionary defeat, the Radical Party suffered from internal divisions and resentment among its members. This, in turn, affected the UCR's performance in Congress, its electoral performance, its internal organization, and, ultimately, its survival.

The transitional period of the UCR, between 1893 and early 1896, has been largely ignored by historians whose accounts tend to jump from the revolutions of 1893 to the disbandment of the party in 1897. However, it is a fundamental period for the fortunes of the party. Its final crisis was not directly due to defeat in the revolutions of 1893. It was principally the result of the radicals' failure during this transitional stage to overcome internal difficulties and to adapt the revolutionary party to a new post-revolutionary era.

This chapter begins by analyzing the series of internal difficulties that the UCR experienced between September 1893 and the end of 1895. After the military defeats, revolution ceased to be an acceptable vehicle for change in Argentine politics. Armed uprisings were publicly condemned by all the press (not only by the conservative newspapers) and the radicals suffered from the exceptionally repressive policies of the government. Inside the UCR, many renounced the use of violence. The party tempered its language and improved its internal organization in order to put it on a sounder footing for electoral competition. These efforts, however, were undermined by the corrosive fragmentation which developed inside its ranks.

The second section of this chapter analyzes the electoral performance of the Radical Party. There has been very little substantive research on elec-



tions in Argentina in the nineteenth century, and, therefore, these pages depart from the narrative approach and present a general analysis of the electoral politics of the period. The chapter concludes with a fresh look at the performance of the members of the Radical Party in Congress. An account of their proposals, interventions, and voting behavior is crucial to the understanding of the nature of the party and the extent of its decline in the later 1890s.

### Principles in Conflict

After the armed uprisings of 1893, revolution, as a party strategy, became deeply unpopular. Naturally, *Tribuna* continued with its campaign against disorder, constantly listing the evils of revolution and the benefits of peace.<sup>1</sup> However, by early 1894, the radicals had also lost important sympathizers. *La Prensa*, which had previously supported the UCR, had now joined the PAN's campaign for order. "Speaking plainly, we do not believe in revolutions," the daily claimed, "this is essentially a time for work, for discussion, for wide-ranging and clear reasoning."<sup>2</sup> The political line emanating from the press was that the revolutions of 1893 had brought no benefits to the provinces in which they had taken place, or to the country as a whole. *Tribuna* estimated that their financial cost had amounted to 30,000,000 pesos, at a time of economic crisis when the price of gold rose continuously and the government struggled to complete negotiations on the public debt. And although not everybody joined *Tribuna* in directly blaming the radicals for wasting the country's scarce resources and scaring European investors, there was a general feeling that the radicals had had their chance, and failed.<sup>3</sup> Now it was time for peace.

The public mood following the revolutions of 1893 can best be illustrated by contrasting it with the aftermath of the revolution of July 1890. As we have seen, the July Revolution of 1890 was followed by a period of frenzied political activity and by a long and heated public debate for and against revolutions, both in the newspapers and in Congress. The revolutions of 1893, however, were followed by a period of calm and relative tranquillity. Contemporaries noted that 1894 was the first peaceful year of the decade; no province suffered a revolution and no political party defended the legitimate use of violence.<sup>4</sup> Whereas July 1890 had been followed by street demonstrations and fervent speeches to celebrate the event, in 1894 not even the radicals tried to defend their recent revolutionary actions either in the press or in Congress. It was as if the revolutions of 1893 had never taken place.

1 See, for example, *Tribuna*, 18 and 22 January 1894.    2 *La Prensa*, 22 May 1894.

3 *Tribuna*, 22 January 1894.    4 *La Prensa*, 1 January 1895.

This change in the public mood was partly related to the outcome of the revolts. But, more important, it was the result of the policies followed by the national government after the revolutions of September 1893. While the rebels of July 1890 had received no punishment and, furthermore, were invited to join the government in a gesture of national reconciliation, in 1893-1894 the government embarked on a campaign of repression against the Radical Party. The whole country was placed under a state of siege, during which public demonstrations were banned and newspapers were strictly censored.<sup>5</sup> The main participants of the revolutions had been either forced into exile or jailed and the government refused to grant the amnesty that in the past had traditionally followed a revolution.<sup>6</sup> Civilian members or sympathizers of the Radical Party were removed from public office, while those in the Army were excluded from the annual list for promotions.<sup>7</sup> Alem, who had won a seat in the Senate a few days before the revolutionary outbreaks of July 1893, was not allowed to take his seat in the chamber. In February 1894, while still in prison, Alem again won a seat in the Senate, but the deliberate delays employed by the senators of the PAN in approving his election convinced him that he would never be allowed to take his seat and he finally relinquished it.

The methods used by the national government to reestablish control in the country were unusually harsh by the country's post-1860s standards. Rebels (military or civil) generally remained unpunished (except for a few days in prison); a state of siege normally lasted only one or two months; and the constitutional principle of freedom of the press was mostly respected. However, after September 1893, the rebels were imprisoned and their leaders put on trial by military or civilian courts. The state of siege imposed by Quintana was maintained throughout 1894 and the press was heavily censored. The provinces where the revolutions of 1893 had taken place also received a harsh treatment. For the first time "ample"<sup>8</sup> federal interventions were conducted, under which all members of all three branches of government (governorship, legislature, and the judiciary) were removed from their positions. The federal interventors appointed were per-

5 L.H. Sommariva, *Historia de las intervenciones federales en las provincias*, Buenos Aires, 1931, Vol. II, p. 222. For the newspaper's censorship, see also Irigoyen's speech in the Senate in *DSCS*, 27 September 1894, p. 571.

6 The amnesty was finally granted on January 1895, after Quintana's resignation.

7 *El Argentino*, 31 May 1894.

8 In a regular federal intervention either the overthrown government was reinstated or elections were called to elect a new governor or a new legislature, depending on the circumstances. In an "ample" intervention, members of all three branches of government were removed and elections were called to fill the posts. For the "ample" interventions conducted in 1893, see Sommariva, *Historia*, Vol. II, pp. 245-252.

sonal friends of Minister Quintana, and it was later discovered that Quintana, violating constitutional regulations, had secretly instructed his friends to "spring clean" the provinces, removing from public office any member or sympathizer of the UCR. He had also secretly instructed the interventors to promote the formation of a PAN-UCN alliance in the provinces.<sup>9</sup>

In the aftermath of the revolutions of 1893, the Radical Party underwent a series of significant changes. Probably the most remarkable was the transformation of the party's image. *El Argentino*, now expanded from two to four pages, became one of the main instruments and evidence of this transformation. Its recalcitrant original discourse directed against the corruption of the country's institutions and the incompetence of President Sáenz Peña gave way to softer language, with little reference to the country's politics. There was also a shift in the focus of the party's political discourse. The recent revolutionary experiences were rarely mentioned and certainly not publicly defended; Quintana's policies were hardly questioned. Rather than focusing on sensitive political issues, *El Argentino* launched a public campaign in defense of free trade, in preparation for a debate on customs duties that was to take place in Congress during 1894.

Between spring 1893 and autumn 1894, most of the UCR's leaders were in jail, exiled, or in hiding. In spite of this, however, the internal organization of the Radical Party remained solid. In January 1894, the UCR held a party convention to elect candidates for the forthcoming elections for Congress in the city and Province of Buenos Aires.<sup>10</sup> It is significant that, as we shall see later in further detail, the UCR triumphed in both electoral contests. In spite of the adverse circumstances, the radicals succeeded not only in sustaining their party structure and in winning elections, but also in maintaining, or even increasing, their popularity. In successive displays of support, a crowd of 40,000 people welcomed Alem to Buenos Aires after his release from jail on 9 March 1894 and, in July and August, two large demonstrations gathered in La Plata and in Buenos Aires to commemorate the July Revolution of 1890.<sup>11</sup>

How was it possible for the radicals to increase their support while defeated? In early 1894, when the increasing strength of the UCR became

9 *La Prensa*, 22 and 23 July 1894. For the significance of Quintana's actions against the country's institutional practices, see Sommariva, *Historia*, Vol. II, pp. 245-252.

10 For the party conventions, see *La Nación*, 24 January 1894. Irigoyen returned from exile on February 1894, but the military personnel were not allowed to return until January 1895, once the amnesty was granted. Those civilians who had been imprisoned were freed in March 1894.

11 For the welcoming of Alem, see *The Economist*, 7 April (11 March) 1894. For the meeting in the Province of Buenos Aires, see *El Argentino*, 30 July 1894, and for the one in the Recoleta cemetery in the federal capital, see *La Prensa*, 6 August 1894, and *El Argentino* 5 August 1894. While the former estimated 10,000 participants in this ceremony the radical daily counted 30,000.

evident, Miguel Cané asked himself the same question when, in a letter to Carlos Pellegrini, he analyzed the UCR. "Which phenomenon," he wrote, "has transformed that stormy faction into a strong, organized party that includes many members of our upper class and also a large proportion of the most prestigious young people, more so than any other political party?"<sup>12</sup>

Cané answered his own question thus: "Their revolutionary attempts . . . had converted them in the eyes of a large section of public opinion into victims and martyrs of a venerable cause."<sup>13</sup> The failure of the revolutions did not make heroes of the radicals, but it made martyrs of them, and this status proved a vote-winner. In some areas, such as the Provinces of Santa Fe and San Luis, the UCR suffered a setback after the revolutions. But in these places the UCR had never been strong. In its traditional strongholds, the city and Province of Buenos Aires, the party gained in strength and its leaders grew in prestige.<sup>14</sup> Despite leading his party in a succession of failed revolutions, Alem's popularity grew. "I have ascertained," a leading member of the UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires wrote to another party member, "that your friend Alem still enjoys the same support among party members." He continued:

I am also convinced that the violence to which he was subjected by the government has produced the following results: (1) He has received more attention than a man like himself, implicated in the recent events, deserves. (2) He has avoided the criticism that is never absent when things go wrong. (3) The grief and sufferings of your friend Alem and the treatment he received from the government have erased the bad impression caused by the last failure.<sup>15</sup>

However, despite its electoral success and increase in popularity, the UCR was experiencing deep internal difficulties. By 1894, the UCR had shown sufficient signs that its rhetoric had softened, that by sending representatives to Congress it had recognized the legitimacy of the current government, and that it had implicitly (although not officially) abandoned the organization of uprisings in the near future. The changes undergone by the UCR were said to create a favorable impression in society in general, but they also provoked fundamental disputes inside the party.<sup>16</sup>

In the months after the revolutions, the main source of difficulty was the coexistence of two conflicting tendencies within the party: those of

<sup>12</sup> Draft of a letter from Miguel Cané to Carlos Pellegrini, 1894, *Archivo Miguel Cané*, Leg. 4, N. 2203.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> In Santa Fe, the repression was firm. An anti-foreigner sentiment came to the fore, resulting in significant persecution of *colonos*. See Manager of Rosario to Buenos Aires, 3 October 1893, *BOLSA*, D 49/33; Gallo, *Farmers in Revolt*, pp. 65-69.

<sup>15</sup> Alfredo Demarchi to Adolfo Saldías, 26 January 1894, *Archivo Saldías*, 3-6-4.

<sup>16</sup> *La Prensa*, 1 January 1895.



"evolution" and "revolution," as they were referred to at the time. The former tendency included those who wanted the party to endorse the principles of peace and order, to abandon revolutions, and to concentrate their efforts on winning elections. As *Tribuna* put it with its usual sarcasm, the electoral victories of 4 February 1894, both in the capital and in the Province of Buenos Aires, had the effect of "a bucket of cold water over the party's exasperation, leading many to realize that what they failed to obtain by force could be obtained by legal means."<sup>17</sup> In contrast, the "revolutionary" line attracted those who thought that the UCR should not renounce the principles under which it had been founded in 1891 – as a party of opposition which would resort to all means, including the use of force. The result was an increased factionalization which was described by *Tribuna* in the following way:

The radicals' uniformity begins to break down, and now shows different shades. There are radicals from the province [Buenos Aires], radicals from the provinces, and radicals from the capital; there are radicals of the first hour and of the second; those who were at the Parque [the July revolution of 1890] and those who joined later; radicals who had always been against Juárez and those who, having supported him, later regretted their actions. And to all of these subdivisions we need to add the "hot" and the moderate ones.<sup>18</sup>

The fragmentation of the UCR, however, was the result but not the cause of the party's problems. All the factions mentioned by *Tribuna* had been there since the founding of the party. However, in the early days, these factions had been united by the common purpose of opposing the national government; they had agreed on the legitimacy of the use of violence; and they had accepted the party leadership of Leandro Alem. In 1894, all these common elements that had given the party its purpose and identity were put in doubt. Members of the UCR questioned the nature of the party, the political means that it should employ, and the benefits of keeping Alem as the party leader. The lack of agreement within the UCR soon provoked a series of conflicts in the party's provincial branches, in the party structure of the city of Buenos Aires, and in the Radicals' National Committee.

The party's new line of softer peaceful opposition placed the party branches of the interior in a difficult position. The UCR had been created as an intransigent party advocating "no deals" and espousing revolution. Both principles were costly. Revolutions had demanded large resources and big sacrifices. Guillermo Leguizamón, president of the UCR of Catamarca, had even sold his furniture to finance the revolution of 1893 in his province,<sup>19</sup> while Mariano Candiotti's militancy in the UCR impoverished him to the extent of forcing him to seek voluntary exile in Brazil in search

<sup>17</sup> *Tribuna*, 8 Marzo 1894.    <sup>18</sup> *Tribuna*, 14 July 1894.

<sup>19</sup> G. Leguizamón to A. Saldías, Catamarca, 4 September 1894, *Archivo Adolfo Saldías*, 3-6-4.

of livelihood.<sup>20</sup> While the revolutionary strategy had demanded from party members personal financial sacrifice, the principle of "no deals" had prevented them from enjoying any material benefit. Particularly in the provinces, as it was put at the time, "public office can be indispensable for the livelihood of decent people"<sup>21</sup> and the members of the Radical Party had sacrificed their share of the "pork barrel." "It is fine for Dr. Alem to have a firm character," a provincial member of the UCR was said to complain, "but he does not know what it means for Lent to last four years."<sup>22</sup>

Many provincial radicals now felt betrayed by the party's new policies. While electoral competition was feasible in the city and Province of Buenos Aires, in the rest of the country revolution remained the radicals' most likely, although remote, avenue to achieve power. However, without the military, financial, and logistic support of the UCR of the city of Buenos Aires, any revolution in the provinces had little chance of success. Furthermore, although the strategy of revolution had been abandoned, the UCR still sustained the principle of "no deals," which in practice implied that the provincial branches of the party had no access to public office. Many branches of the UCR in the provinces expressed their disappointment at the party's new direction. Some factions in the interior demanded that the UCR representatives resign from Congress "and refused to collaborate with representatives who represent only the imposition and fraud of the government party";<sup>23</sup> many demanded a Party Convention to determine the UCR's future strategies;<sup>24</sup> others asked permission from the National Committee to form coalitions with other factions;<sup>25</sup> while some went ahead and made coalitions with other local parties, thus breaking the UCR's policy of "no deals."<sup>26</sup>

The provincial branches of the UCR were not alone in finding it difficult to adjust to the new situation. The party structure of the city of Buenos Aires was also affected by the internal party conflict between "evolution" and "revolution." At the lower level, clashes over the direction of the party's local committees resulted in organizational problems, resentment, and resignations.<sup>27</sup> A group of young party members, disappointed

20 See Alejandro E. Fournier, "Mariano N. Candiotti y otros hombres del 90 y del 93," in *MyD*, Buenos Aires, 1957, Vol. III, p. 391; see also Mariano N. Candiotti to Martín García Merou, 30 June 1895, in *MyD*, Vol. III, p. 444.

21 *Tribuna*, 14 July 1894. 22 *Ibid*.

23 *Tribuna*, 9 June 1894. On similar complaints, see also *Tribuna*, 18 August 1894.

24 That was the case of Tucumán and Santa Fe. *Tribuna*, 9 and 12 October 1894.

25 That was the case of Garro in Córdoba. *La Nación*, 8 April 1894.

26 That was the case of Santiago del Estero (*Tribuna*, 19 February 1894), Mendoza (*La Nación*, 5 and 8 January 1895), and San Luis (*Tribuna*, 8 January 1895).

27 On the resignations, see *Tribuna*, 4 October 1894. On dissension and conflicts over the leadership of the local committees, see *La Nación*, 1 January, 23 August, 2 October 1894, 21 March 1895; *Tribuna*, 27 February, 2, 16, and 25 March 1895.

with their party's new course, formed a separate organization, claiming that the old guard had become slow and inefficient.<sup>28</sup> At the national level, the leadership of Leandro Alem was questioned. Alem opposed the new moderate route the party had taken and wanted to maintain the UCR's old direction. He knew that "there are people in the party who want me to step aside."<sup>29</sup> In January 1894, rumors began to circulate regarding the most likely candidates to replace Alem and to lead the party in its new phase. The two main contenders were Bernardo de Irigoyen and Hipólito Yrigoyen.

Bernardo de Irigoyen's stronghold was the city of Buenos Aires. Irigoyen represented the moderate tendency of the party, composed of those who wanted to change its original image to a new one of peaceful and well-organized opposition which would focus the party activities on elections and congressional representation. Irigoyen did not have much influence in the party's National Committee; his main strength resided in his potential capacity to attract voters from other parties and, if necessary, to forge agreements with other opposition groups. His wealth financed *El Argentino* and he had a strong influence over the party's newspaper. He was chiefly responsible for the more temperate tone the daily had adopted since the end of 1893, and he refused to give in to Alem, who wanted *El Argentino* to regain its old strident identity.<sup>30</sup> Irigoyen also counted on the support of a new Radical-moderate newspaper launched in 1894, *El Tiempo*, which was particularly critical of Alem and Hipólito Yrigoyen.

Hipólito Yrigoyen had been in charge of the UCR's branch in the Province of Buenos Aires since 1891. He had managed it in complete independence of the party's National Committee, and even Alem, the party's formal president, publicly confessed that he could not control or influence the party's affairs in the Province of Buenos Aires.<sup>31</sup> Yrigoyen's popularity had risen after the revolution of 1893 and, in particular, after the series of UCR's electoral victories in the Province of Buenos Aires in early 1894.<sup>32</sup>

28 *Tribuna*, 4 June 1895.

29 "Carta de Alem al Doctor Adolfo Saldías desde su prisión en Rosario," 19 February 1894, in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, p. 227.

30 See Irigoyen to Saldías, 2 March 1894; Alem to Saldías, 16 April 1894, in *Archivo Saldías*, 3-6-4.

31 *La Nación*, 5 April 1894.

32 The Radical Party of the Province of Buenos Aires won the elections for Congress on 5 February 1894 and few weeks later the provincial elections for the governorship (25 February) and the legislature (25 March). A pact in the Electoral College between the Unión Provincial (the provincial branch of the PAN) and the *mitristas* installed a joint governor, frustrating the Radicals' victory. See R. Etchepareborda, "Las presidencias de Uriburu y Roca," in G. Ferrari and E. Gallo (comp.), *La Argentina del ochenta al centenario*, Buenos Aires, 1980, p. 259.

He had exceptional organizational skills and many thought that these would be instrumental in the party's new strategy of focusing on electoral competition. Yrigoyen's leadership, however, was resisted by those who were close to Alem. The relationship between uncle and nephew, which had never been particularly close, further deteriorated after the revolutions of September 1893. Alem became a bitter man. From jail he spoke of "cowardliness, defections, and betrayals" and of having been "treacherously deceived and betrayed."<sup>33</sup> He threatened to publish a manifesto to explain the "real" causes of the revolutionary defeat.<sup>34</sup> The charges were directed at Yrigoyen, although it has never been proved whether they were justified. Similar accusations and criticism against Yrigoyen were explicit in the first history of the revolution of July 1893 in the Province of Buenos Aires, published in 1895 by a party member.<sup>35</sup> A new radical newspaper, *El Tiempo*, which represented the new post-1893 line in the city of Buenos Aires, also made public the reservations of many party members concerning Yrigoyen's potential leadership, pointing to his "personalist" tendencies and the free hand with which he had managed the affairs of the province.<sup>36</sup>

Under pressure, Alem repeated the same move he had made in the past when his authority over the party had been disputed: He resigned from the party's presidency. His resignation had to be considered by the UCR's National Committee. If accepted, he would be replaced by a moderate candidate; if not, the hard-liners would triumph. With his resignation Alem transformed the question of the future of the party into a matter of personal loyalty. His move, however, was a safe one as he enjoyed a comfortable majority in the National Committee.<sup>37</sup> On 15 August 1894, the Radical National Committee met to consider Alem's resignation, and, as expected, it was rejected.<sup>38</sup> Alem's confirmation as the party's president was accompanied by an official declaration that "the party manifesto remains unchanged; the party's policy has been stated by the National Convention held on 17 November 1892, and this policy can be changed only by another National Convention."<sup>39</sup>

It seemed that Alem had defeated his rivals. However, as we shall see below, his victory did not restore his leadership over the UCR, nor did it put an end to the friction inside its ranks. More significant, in spite of the

33 *MyD*, Vol. VIII, p. 223. 34 *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 226.

35 L.R. Fors, 1893: *Levantamiento, revolución y desarme de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 1895, see esp. pp. 440-444.

36 See, for example, *El Tiempo*, 7 August 1895.

37 Besides his support in the National Committee, Alem also could count on the majority of the local committees of the capital and on the UCR's branch of the province of Santa Fe, one of the largest party units of the interior. See *La Nación*, 17 August 1894 and 21 March 1895.

38 For the meeting, see *La Prensa*, 15 August 1894. 39 *Ibid.*



official declarations, the party did not change the moderate outlook adopted after 1893 and, until 1905, did not resort to further revolutionary action or propaganda. As *La Nación* put it, "formally the intransigent line has triumphed but in reality the majority of the party supports evolution."<sup>40</sup> Alem's confirmation as the UCR's leader placed the party in a deadlock, stuck between "revolution" and "evolution." The party had failed to redefine its identity and to overcome its factionalism. Its weakness did not escape the attention of its rivals who hurried to stress the internal contradictions of the UCR:

[The UCR] does not openly support or condemn the principle of revolution; it is neither in or outside the political game, given that on the one hand it participates in it and on the other it rejects it. It pretends to be a radical opponent and it has become an ordinary party of opposition.<sup>41</sup>

The future of the Radical Party at this stage depended crucially on its ability to survive this transitional period and to reformulate its strategy. While initially it seemed that the party had overcome the revolutionary defeats and gained in popularity by winning elections in 1894, it soon became obvious that the UCR would fail to find a solution to its internal struggle.

### The Electoral Performance of the Radical Party

The UCR regularly contested elections during the 1890s.<sup>42</sup> However, little is known about the party's electoral performance during the period. There are two main reasons for this. The first is related to the common but flawed assumption that the UCR did not participate in elections until 1912, when the vote became secret and compulsory for all Argentine males over eighteen years of age. Once Hipólito Yrigoyen took over the direction of the party in the twentieth century, he ruled that the UCR would not participate in elections until fair electoral competition could be guaranteed. This has led to the common misunderstanding that the UCR abstained from contesting elections from the time of its foundation. The second reason relates to the underdeveloped nature of research into nineteenth-century electoral politics. Little is known about the nature of party competition, the contesting parties' electoral performances, or the characteristics of their

40 *La Nación*, 22 August 1894. 41 *La Nación*, 17 August 1894.

42 This section is based on Paula Alonso, "Politics and Elections in Buenos Aires, 1890-1898: The Performance of the Radical Party," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 25, October 1993, pp. 467-487.

electoral support. Despite some recent research on electoral history, nineteenth-century elections remain an obscure topic.<sup>43</sup>

Discussion of Argentine electoral politics prior to 1912 has generally focused on the issues of corruption, repression, and lack of popular participation. In the standard interpretation of Argentina's political history, elections were little more than the principal means by which the PAN sustained itself in power, preventing the emergence of opposition groups representing the new social forces (mainly the middle class) from exercising their right to vote. Argentina established the principle of male universal suffrage at a very early date. It was first included in the constitution of the Province of Buenos Aires of 1821; to qualify, a voter needed only to be male and over twenty years of age. Buenos Aires was not the only province which adopted universal suffrage; at least three other provinces also established it at the time, although after a few years they abandoned it and followed the more common pattern of introducing professional or educational restrictions. The National Constitution of 1853 said very little about elections. Paradoxically, while the constitution did establish some requirements for becoming a representative, it said nothing about who would be entitled to vote. Regulation of the franchise and of the electoral system was left to Congress.<sup>44</sup>

By then, the principle of male universal suffrage had had a long history in Buenos Aires, the country's leading province.<sup>45</sup> Although most provinces had restricted voting to those who could read and write or had professional qualifications, these requirements were soon abolished by the

43 This is not only the case for Argentina but also for Latin America and Europe. For recent examples of research on elections in Europe and Latin America, see F. O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: The Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England, 1734-1832*, Oxford, 1989; J.A. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England. Plumpers, Splitters and Straights*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1982; J.S. Valenzuela, *Democratización vía reforma: La expansión del sufragio en Chile*, Buenos Aires, 1985; the collections of works in E. Posada-Carbó (ed.), *Elections before Democracy: The History of Elections in Europe and Latin America*, London, 1996; and in A. Annino (ed.), *Historia de las elecciones en Iberoamérica, siglo XIX*, Mexico, 1995; R. Graham, *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, Stanford, 1990; A. Navas Blanco, *Las elecciones presidenciales en Venezuela del siglo XIX, 1830-1854*, Caracas, 1993; E. Posada-Carbó, "Elections and Civil Wars in Nineteenth-Century Colombia: The 1875 Presidential Campaign," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 26, N. 3, October 1994, pp. 621-59, and his "Limits of Power: Elections Under the Conservative Hegemony in Colombia, 1886-1930," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 77, N. 2, 1997, pp. 246-279; F. Xavier-Guerra, "The Spanish American Tradition of Representation and Its European Roots," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 26, N. 1, February 1994, pp. 1-36.

44 Paula Alonso, "Voting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, before 1912," in Posada-Carbó, *Elections before Democracy*, pp. 182-184.

45 For an analysis of elections in the Province of Buenos Aires between 1820 to 1847, see Marcela Ternavasio, "Nuevo régimen representativo y expansión de la frontera política: Las elecciones en el estado de Buenos Aires: 1820-1840," in Annino, *Historia de las elecciones*, pp. 65-106.

National Congress following the example of Buenos Aires. By 1856, all Argentine males over seventeen years of age had the right to vote in national elections. Between 1862 and 1930, when the first military coup took place in Argentina, national elections were held with the frequency established by the National Constitution and according to the regulations determined by national laws.

Perhaps because the question of the franchise was resolved at a very early stage in Argentina's development, it never became a significant issue in the frequent debates about the electoral system in the National Congress. Congressional debates on elections generally considered the allocation of votes, the size of wards, the registration of voters, and the improvement of the voting system, but not the franchise.<sup>46</sup> This does not mean that there was unanimous agreement on the benefits of universal suffrage, but demands for restricting the franchise received little political support and were never introduced.<sup>47</sup> The main electoral reform of the period was in 1912 when the vote became secret and compulsory.

The predominant view has been that Argentina's early adoption of male universal suffrage made little difference to the country's electoral and political development compared with countries which maintained literacy and property restrictions until the first half of the twentieth century. The political and electoral predominance of the PAN in the 1880–1916 period and the innumerable accounts of electoral fraud and low turn-outs have been seen as evidence that, until 1912, elections were simply an exercise in repression and manipulation by the landed elite.<sup>48</sup>

In recent years a few works have challenged this dominant view of pre-1912 electoral practice, arguing that elections during this period deserve closer attention as a significant component of the country's political life. Election campaigns stimulated public participation, elections themselves

46 For a discussion of the main electoral reforms of 1902 and 1912, see Botana, *El orden conservador*, pp. 251–291; D. Cullen-Crisol, "Electoral Practices in Argentina, 1898–1904," D.Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1994, pp. 196–312; Carlos Malamud, "La efímera reforma electoral de 1902," paper presented in LASA, Guadalajara, April 1997.

47 Alonso, "Voting in Buenos Aires," pp. 182–183.

48 Most works of Argentine historiography followed this line of argument. Among the best ones, see D. Cantón, *Elecciones y partidos políticos en la Argentina: Historia, interpretación y balance, 1910–1966*, Buenos Aires, 1973; G. Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición: De la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas*, Buenos Aires, 1965, pp. 147–156, and his "Hacia una democracia de masas," in T. Di Tella (et al.), *Argentina, sociedad de masas*, Buenos Aires, 1965, pp. 206–227; J.L. Romero, *Historia de las ideas políticas en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1946. For examples of more recent works that have also followed these traditional arguments, see P.H. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy: Conflict among Political Elites, 1904–1955*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1974, pp. 1–22; D. Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890–1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism*, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 1–66; K. Remmer, *Party Competition in Argentina and Chile: Political Recruitment and Public Policy, 1890–1930*, Lincoln, Nebraska, and London, 1984, pp. 24–33, 87–111.

became the main means of access to political power, and the existence of fraud did not preclude party competition.<sup>49</sup> In studies on elections during the 1860s and 1870s in the city of Buenos Aires, it has been argued that those who voted were not the privileged few but rather the popular sectors (composed of peons, journeymen, and unskilled workers) who were marched to the polls on election day, under the direction of party factions.<sup>50</sup> Research on the electoral participation of immigrants in municipal elections has revealed the extent of their participation in local electoral contests, challenging the common view that immigrants were indifferent toward the country's political life.<sup>51</sup>

However, these studies have not yet reversed the standard view that sees elections of the period as simply exercises in repression and manipulation by the elite. A comprehensive study of pre-1912 elections is still lacking and there has been little analysis of the electoral contests of the 1890s. Therefore, it is necessary to place the city of Buenos Aires's electoral life of the 1890s in context before considering the electoral performance of the Radical Party. It should be stressed, however, that the following analysis is restricted to the city of Buenos Aires in the 1890s. Politics in large cities was significantly different from that in the countryside, and Buenos Aires represented a sharp contrast to the interior. Traditionally, Buenos Aires

49 One of the pioneer works on the significance of elections in the political system of the turn of the century is Botana, *El orden conservador*; see also his "Estudio preliminar" to the new edition of 1996. See also Hilda Sabato, "Elecciones y prácticas electorales en Buenos Aires, 1860-1880. ¿Sufragio universal sin ciudadanía política?," in Annino, *Historia de las elecciones*, pp. 107-142; Hilda Sabato and Ema Cibotti, "Hacer política en Buenos Aires: Los italianos en la escena pública porteña, 1860," *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. Emilio Ravignani"*, 3rd series, 2, 1990, pp. 7-45; Sabato and Elías Palti, "Quién votaba en Buenos Aires? Práctica y teoría del sufragio, 1850-1880," *Desarrollo Económico*, vol. 30, N. 119, October-December, 1990, pp. 399-424; "Citizenship, Political Participation and the Formation of the Public Sphere in Buenos Aires, 1850s-1880s," *Past and Present*, August 1992, pp. 139-163; Sabato, *La política en las calles: Entre el voto y la movilización, Buenos Aires, 1862-1880*, Buenos Aires, 1998; Alonso, "Politics and Elections" and "Voting in Buenos Aires"; Cullen-Crisol, "Electoral Practices"; Eduardo Zimmermann, "La prensa y la oposición política en la Argentina de comienzo de siglo: El caso de 'La Nación' y el Partido Republicano," *Estudios Sociales*, 15, Ato VII, Segundo Semestre, 1998, pp. 45-70. An analysis of the most recent works on elections in Buenos Aires between 1860 and 1910 can be found in Paula Alonso, "La nueva historia política de la Argentina del ochenta al centenario," *Anuario iehs*, Vol. 13, 1998, pp. 393-418.

50 Sabato, "Hacer política," pp. 7-45; Sabato, "Quién votaba en Buenos Aires?," pp. 399-424; Sabato, "Citizenship," pp. 139-163; Sabato, *La política en las calles*.

51 Ema Cibotti, "Sufragio, prensa y opinión: Las elecciones municipales de 1883 en Buenos Aires," in Annino, *Historia de las elecciones*, pp. 143-176; Sabato, "Hacer política"; Marta Bonaudo, Silvia Cragnolino, and Elida Sonzogni, "Discusión en torno a la participación política de los colonos santafesinos: 1880-1884," *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, N. 9, August 1988, pp. 295-329; Sabato "Citizenship"; Eduardo J. Míguez, "Política, participación y poder: Los inmigrantes en las tierras nuevas de la provincia de Buenos Aires en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX," *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, Year 2, August-December, 1987, N. 6-7, pp. 337-378.



had been at the core of the country's political activities. Its political atmosphere had always been vigorous in comparison to that of the provinces – and it was certainly agitated in the 1890s. Buenos Aires had the largest population of the country and the most politically aware electorate. Its inhabitants demonstrated, rioted, went on strike, signed petitions, and voted. The 143 newspapers and magazines that circulated in the city kept them constantly informed. In Buenos Aires, elections were freer from fraud and violence than those in the provinces. Furthermore, the city of Buenos Aires and the provinces each consisted of single electoral districts and the *porteño* population was easier and less expensive to mobilize than that of the vast and underpopulated countryside.<sup>52</sup> All three political parties competing in Buenos Aires during the 1890s, the UCN, the UCR, and the PAN, found it easy to extend their organization to the full complement of the sixteen electoral wards into which the city was divided. The contrasts between the capital and the provinces make generalizations about voting patterns in the country as a whole very difficult, if not impossible on the basis of the evidence of Buenos Aires.

Elections in Buenos Aires took place frequently. National elections for the presidency and vice-presidency took place every six years, the reelection of half the seats of the Chamber of Deputies every two years, and a third of the seats of the Senate every three. In addition there were regular municipal elections.<sup>53</sup> Electoral campaigns usually began around two months before each election. As discussed above, in the 1890s all three parties were organized into decentralized systems of committees and conventions, following the U.S. model. Members of the party committees were in charge of mobilizing the population during the electoral campaign and selecting the candidates. The selection of candidates involved campaigning; candidates would visit local committees to give speeches and seek support. Each faction filled the editorials of their respective newspapers with attacks on their opponents and statements of their party's prin-

52 Whereas in 1895 the city of Buenos Aires had a population density of 3,569 per square kilometer, for example, the density of the Province of Buenos Aires was 3.02, and of the Province of Salta, one of the poorest regions, was 0.72. *Segundo Censo de la República Argentina (1895)*, Vol. II, Buenos Aires, 1898, p. cxxv.

53 There are two main reasons why this study is restricted to national elections and excludes the municipal ones. First, because the electoral results for municipal elections do not appear as clearly published in the newspapers. Second, because the electorate for municipal elections was different from that of the national elections. To be able to vote in the municipal elections of the city of Buenos Aires the law required that citizens should have paid a minimum of 10 pesos in direct tax or *patente comercial o industrial*, or have a liberal profession (i.e., lawyer or journalist) and have lived in the city for a minimum of six months, or be a literate foreigner and have paid 50 pesos in direct tax or *patente comercial o industrial*, and have lived in the city for a minimum of two years before the enrollment in the Electoral Register. See *Anuario Estadístico de la ciudad de Buenos Aires*, 1891, Año 1, Buenos Aires, 1891, pp. 447.

ciples. There were no significant distinctions between the campaigning methods of the three parties.

Elections took place on Sundays, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The city was divided into sixteen electoral districts. In each ward polling sites were organized in the local churches, under the authority of a group of male citizens randomly chosen by the authorities.<sup>54</sup> Each party also ensured that they had a party militant at each table in order to prevent fraud by the opposition, to instigate fraud on their own behalf, and to encourage their followers to vote — before 1912 the vote was not secret and voters could easily be influenced. Each voter stated on a piece of paper his name, address, number on the Electoral Register, and the name of the candidates he wished to vote for. Once the election was over the police were responsible for sending the registers to the Junta Electoral for the counting of the votes. When the counting was finished, the registers were sent to Congress, which was the highest authority for ruling on disputes over elections. Congressmen of all parties then had the opportunity of expressing their complaints. Naturally, those parties with greater representation in Congress had a better chance of having the results approved in those elections in which they had won and frequently placed obstacles in the approval process of those elections won by the opposition.

It is hardly necessary to point out that elections in Buenos Aires were not exempt from fraudulent acts and outbreaks of violence.<sup>55</sup> These occurred throughout the city, from its richest to its poorest areas. A reporter for *The Economist*, for example, claimed that during an election in 1892, "in one of the most aristocratic and wealthy parishes of the city a friend of mine saw a street porter vote five times under as many different names."<sup>56</sup> Edwin Clark, an Englishman who spent some time in Argentina, witnessed a more violent scene:

During my residence in Buenos Aires, a body of voters quietly going to the poll were driven back by a volley of musketry from the roof of a neighbouring building, and what is more remarkable, the perpetrators of the outrage maintained a right to retain the arms thus used at a time of profound peace.<sup>57</sup>

The existence of fraud during elections should not lead to the assumption that the party in government had a monopoly on fraudulent activities or that its victory could be guaranteed even before the elections took place. As mentioned above, the traditional view has argued that fraud was

54 For the regulations of the elections, see Ley 893 (759), "Régimen electoral," in *DSCD* (Buenos Aires, 1880), pp. 1154–1159.

55 For an analysis of the use of fraud in elections, see Botana, *El orden conservador*, pp. 174–189; A. Belín Sarmiento, *Una República Muerta*, Buenos Aires, 1970, pp. 10, 13–21, 39–47; J.N. Matienzo, *El gobierno representativo federal en la República Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1910, pp. 225–252.

56 *The Economist*, 21 May 1892. 57 *The Times*, 8 July 1880.

imposed by the PAN, who systematically and successfully repressed opposition groups and the new social forces they represented, driving them away from the polling stations. However, as we shall see when analyzing the electoral performances of the parties, the electoral results show that there was a high degree of party competition: Electoral results certainly could not be guaranteed beforehand.

It is impossible to quantify the impact of fraud on the electoral results. However, in analyzing the unsavory aspects of the electoral contests a number of factors need to be considered. Violence was not a key feature of all the elections of the 1890s and we should not assume that an election day always drove the city into anarchy or civil war. In the 1860s and 1870s elections had been generally violent. Commercial enterprises, the theater, and other public places closed several days before the election. On election day, voters, who were generally armed either with guns or knives, were guided and guarded on their way to the polling stations by the members of the party clubs. Often the outcome was shootings and deaths, either at the time of voting, when opposition groups met at the polling tables, or when the votes were counted at the end of the day.<sup>58</sup>

However, by the 1890s, outbreaks of violence were rare and violence on election day was remembered as a feature of the "savage" electoral practices of the past.<sup>59</sup> As was repeatedly observed at the time, the fact that elections ended "without bloodshed, or without a couple of dead bodies being left near a poll station"<sup>60</sup> was viewed as a sign of progress in the country's political development. In the 1890s, election day had ceased to be violent, feared by the inhabitants of the city; they were generally reported as "peaceful" and "without incident" by the contemporary press. Shops and theaters stayed open, and only seldom did disturbances interrupt the voting. In some electoral districts the press reported "some arguments and fistfights," but most of the elections were described as "without incident." "The ladies attending Sunday mass," *La Nación*, for example, reported in 1891, "would not have realised that an election was taking place in the same church, had it not been for the officers who guarded the entrance."<sup>61</sup>

However, the absence of violence in the elections did not mean that the

58 Sabato, "Citizenship," pp. 144-148; Sabato, "¿Quién votaba en Buenos Aires?," pp. 401-424; Sabato, *La política en las calles*, pp. 145-153. Cantón, *Elecciones*, pp. 41-42.

59 There was a wide consensus at the time about the changing practices on election day and the end of violent confrontations between the contesting parties. See, for example, *Tribuna*, 19 March 1895; *La Nación*, 5 April 1897.

60 *La Nación*, 5 April 1895.

61 The quotes come from "Análisis electoral por parroquia," *La Prensa*, 23 March 1895; *La Nación*, 16 March 1891. The press is a valuable source for the description of the elections as it usually presented a detailed report on the events of each ward.

vote had become "clean." It meant only that more ingenious tricks had come to replace the electoral violence of the past.<sup>62</sup> The lists of complaints drawn up by the parties after the elections provide endless examples of manipulation: false registrations, false voters, men voting several times.<sup>63</sup> All sorts of incentives were used to encourage the electorate to vote. Barbecues, dances, and money were increasingly used to tempt the citizens into abandoning their political apathy on election day. Although more research on the relationship between parties and voters is needed, the descriptions of the press of the electoral contests suggest that, by the turn of the century, persuasion may have been a more common tool than force in the electoral politics of the city of Buenos Aires.<sup>64</sup>

Who went to the polls in the city of Buenos Aires in the 1890s? In quantitative terms, only a small proportion of the city's total population and only a small percentage of those eligible to vote actually voted. In 1895, the city of Buenos Aires had 663,854 inhabitants. The law established that Argentine males over seventeen years of age were eligible to vote in national elections. In the capital, this amounted to 51,089.<sup>65</sup> The law also established that those qualified to vote should be enrolled on the Electoral Register, which stated name, address, employment, age, and literacy. The register was renewed every two years. In 1891 and 1896, only half of the population eligible to vote was enrolled on the Electoral Register,<sup>66</sup> and only half of those who had enrolled went to the polls.<sup>67</sup> Con-

62 President Sáenz Peña, "Manifiesto al Pueblo, 28 February 1912," in R. Sáenz Peña, *Escritos y discursos*, Vol. II, p. 111; Cantón, *Elecciones*, pp. 41-42; Cárcano, *Sáenz Peña*, pp. 131-132.

63 See, for example, the list of complaints raised by deputy Francisco Barroetaveña (from the Radical Party) in Congress, *DSCD*, 5 May 1896, pp. 33-41.

64 For a brief analysis of the transformation of the electoral culture of the city of Buenos Aires before 1912, see Alonso, "Voting in Buenos Aires," pp. 189-194.

65 *Segundo Censo*, vol. II, pp. 11-12. It should be noted that a large part of the population of Buenos Aires was composed of foreigners. In 1895, foreign males in the city of Buenos Aires amounted to 206,071 and most of them were between 20 and 50 years old. *Segundo censo*, vol. II, p. 10.

66 Some 25,049 in 1891, 22,000 in 1895, and 24,200 in 1896. This is a relatively high number in comparison with the provinces, where apparently only between 5 and 15 percent of those eligible to vote were enrolled in the Electoral Registers between 1860 and 1890. See G.O.E. Tjarks, "Aspectos cuantitativos del estado económico y social de la ciudadanía Argentina potencialmente votante (1860-1890)," *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina Dr. Emilio Ravignani*, Año XI T.XI, Buenos Aires, 1969, N. 18-19, p. 30.

67 This amounted to 9,975 in 1891 and to 12,213 in 1896. For the election of 1896 for example, the turnout represented only 1.8 percent of the total population of the city, 23.9 percent of the total population eligible to vote, and 50.4 percent of those enrolled in the Electoral Register. This is a small percentage if we compare it with the turnout of the total population in Brazil in 1894 (2.2%), Chile in 1888 (3.46%), Great Britain in 1890 (12%), France in 1890 (27%), and the United States in 1880 (23%). All these figures, however, refer to the turnout of the whole country for national elections (in contrast to Buenos Aires), and these countries also had different thresholds for vote eligibility, which makes comparison problematic. For Brazil's figures, see J.L. Love,



sidering the turnout for the period in relation to the total population eligible to vote, Figure 5.1 shows that the numbers of voters varied from a low point in the by-election of July 1893 (9.2%) to a high point in the first election of 1892 (26%). The turnout of 43 percent in the presidential elections of 1898 was an exception to the general rule of low participation. The figures are rather volatile because they include all the national elections of the period, including a by-election (1893), uncontested elections (1890, 1891, 1892 (2), 1893, 1895 (1)), and elections that, although contested, saw little competition given the comfortable dominance of the PAN-UCN coalition (1898).

As has been pointed out, the rise of party competition in the 1890s did not reflect a dramatic rise in the number of voters in comparison with the number of people voting in the 1880s.<sup>68</sup> However, if we take into account the overall trend of electoral participation from the 1890s up to the reform of 1912, it can be seen that the 1890s set the trend for a rapid growth of the voting population.<sup>69</sup>

Who went to the polls in the 1890s? The standard interpretation argues that only a privileged few voted and that the "popular sectors" were excluded. On the other hand, it has also been argued that, during the 1860s and 1870, only the socially marginal males voted, while the middle and upper classes remained indifferent to electoral politics.<sup>70</sup> In both interpretations, the middle class did not exercise their right to vote. However, as we shall see, the evidence shows that during the 1890s the electorate was composed of members of all social groups. Information on the electorate can be obtained from the Electoral Register of the city of Buenos Aires of 1896.<sup>71</sup> The register, one of the very few that had survived from the nineteenth century, lists all Argentine males over seventeen years of age who willingly enrolled themselves to vote in the elections, and contains their names and addresses, literacy capacities, ages, and occupations. In his memoirs, Angel Carrasco recalls that registration was merely "the appetizer" of the fraudulent activities that later took pace in the election.<sup>72</sup>

"Political Participation in Brazil, 1881-1969," *Luso Brazilian Review*, vol. VII, Dec. 1970, N. 2, p. 4; for Chile, J.S. Valenzuela, *Democratización via reforma*, Appendix; for Great Britain, France, and the United States, see Wolfgang Zapf and Peter Flora, "Differences in Paths of Development: An Analysis for Ten Countries," in S.N. Eisenstadt and S. Rokkan (eds.), *Building States and Nations: Models and Data Resources*, vol. I, Beverly Hills and London, 1973, pp. 193-196.

68 During the 1880s the number of voters varied from 6,505 in 1880 to 8,930 in 1882 and 9,771 in 1886. Botana, *El orden conservador*, pp. 191-192.

69 This growth accelerated after 1904. See Alonso, "Voting," pp. 186-189.

70 Sabato, "¿Quién votaba en Buenos Aires?," pp. 401-424; "Citizenship," pp. 144-148.

71 The Electoral Register was published by the *Boletín Oficial de la República Argentina*, Buenos Aires, Nov., Dec., 1895; Jan., Feb., March, 1896.

72 A. Carrasco, *Lo que yo vi desde el 80 . . . Hombres y episodios de la transformación nacional*, Buenos Aires, 1947, pp. 38-39.

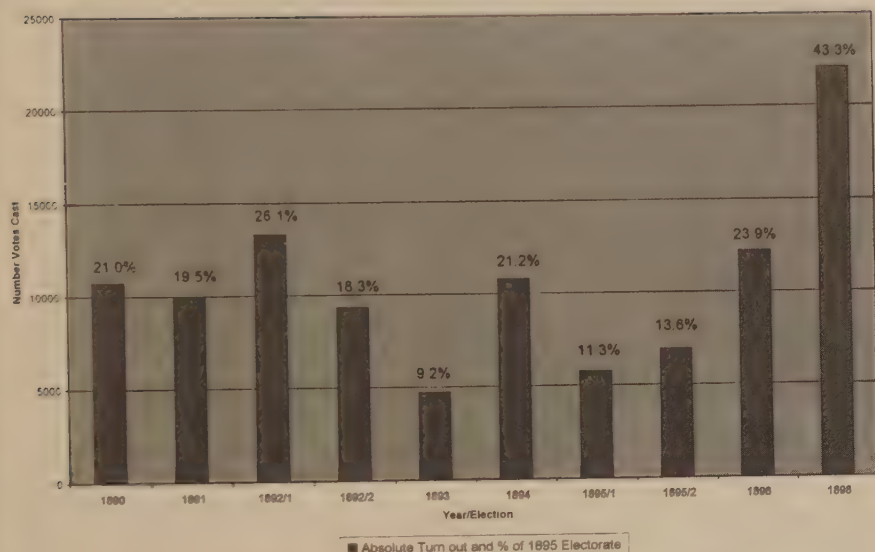


Figure 5.1. Votes cast in national elections, city of Buenos Aires, 1890-1898.

Source: Electoral results taken from *La Prensa*.

Nonetheless, fraudulent registrations were generally a minority and the problem has been partly solved here by excluding from the samples of each ward those registrations which were nullified.

The Electoral Register of 1896 contains a total of 24,200 names divided according to the electoral districts to which the potential voters belonged. A random sample of 100 names from each of sixteen electoral wards was selected and divided according to eight different occupational divisions following Szuchman and Sofer's classification.<sup>73</sup> This occupational classification was made according to the age and training required for the job, its level of complexity, and the financial remuneration of each occupation. For clarity's sake, this original classification has been simplified into three groups, working-, middle-, and upper-class, and it is this classification that is employed in the following discussion.<sup>74</sup> It is hardly necessary to point out that since there is always a degree of arbitrariness in any such classification (as in any quantitative method for analyzing a society), this analysis can reflect only a general tendency rather than

73 Mark D. Szuchman and Eugene F. Sofer, "The State of Occupational Stratification Studies in Argentina," *Latin American Research Review*, 11:1 (1976), pp. 159-172.

74 Walter's work has been followed in aggregating the professions in three categories. Richard Walter, "Elections in the City of Buenos Aires during the First Yrigoyen Administration: Social Class and Political Preferences," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 58(4), 1978, pp. 604, 610-613.

Table 5.1. *Characteristics of the electorate in Buenos Aires by ward*

	Average age	Percent literate	Percent in each occupational group <sup>a</sup>		
			1	2	3
1 Catedral N.	29.0	NA	41.8	40.7	17.6
2 Catedral S.	31.7	99	14.3	64.8	20.9
3 S. Miguel	31.9	99	28.1	57.3	14.6
4 S. Nicolas	38.6	99	21.7	48.9	29.3
5 Monserrat	28.3	100	44.6	37.3	18.1
6 Piedad	28.7	92	50.0	41.1	8.9
7 Balvanera	28.5	99	43.3	46.4	10.3
8 S. Cristobal	31.3	84	61.6	31.3	7.1
9 Socorro	28.3	95	40.4	41.6	18.0
10 S. Telmo	31.7	92	53.1	37.5	9.4
11 Concepcion	30.0	100	33.7	50.0	16.3
12 Sta. Lucia	30.4	88	57.7	36.1	6.2
13 S.J. Evangelista	28.3	81	59.2	37.8	3.1
14 Pilar	28.7	92	57.6	29.3	13.1
15 Belgrano	27.0	89	56.0	37.4	6.6
16 Flores	32.8	78	61.2	29.6	9.2
Averages across all wards	30.3	92.5	45.3	41.7	13.0

<sup>a</sup>Group 1 (working class): journeyman, sailor, mason, carpenter, gardener, tailor, rural labourer, baker, shoemaker, coachdriver, cooper, blacksmith; group 2 (middle class): journalist, broker, musician, commissions agent, manufacturer, merchant; group 3 (upper class): accountant, cattle owner, notary, lawyer, engineer, doctor, professor.

provide realistic results. Table 5.1 shows some characteristics of the *porteño* electorate of 1896.<sup>75</sup>

Of the sample of 1,600 names taken, the average voter was thirty years old. Only 7.5 percent of the electorate was illiterate, most of these being *jornaleros* or sailors. This is a low figure if we take into account that, in the city of Buenos Aires in 1895, 78 percent of Argentine males over six years of age knew how to read and write.<sup>76</sup> It is also a remarkably low figure if we compare it with to the Province of Buenos Aires where illiterate voters composed 56 percent of the electorate in 1889.<sup>77</sup> It is difficult to know

75 The list of the professional groups shown here represents only a small example of the more complete classification used in this work, which follows Szuchman, "The State of Occupation Stratification," Appendix B, pp. 166-169.

76 *Segundo censo*, vol. II, p. clxxiii. 77 Tjarks, "Aspectos cuantitativos," Appendix, Table II.

whether the 93 percent of potential voters in the city of Buenos Aires used their reading ability to become well-informed on party issues and read party platforms published by the press before going to the polls. It does mean, however, that a large majority of the electorate could at least read the lists of candidates presented to them when they stated their choice on paper.

What does the analysis by occupation indicate? Although the figures show that working-class voters composed a large proportion of the electorate (45%), they were closely followed by the middle class (42%).<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, taking groups 2 and 3 (middle and upper sectors) together, they outnumbered the members of the working class. In six wards, middle-class inscriptions outnumbered those of the working class. On the other hand, the upper sectors (group 3) were only a minority of the electorate. Nevertheless, their presence in the register should not be underestimated. In nine wards out of sixteen, they represented more than 10 percent of the electorate.

The electorate of the 1890s was, therefore, better qualified than the descriptions of the voters of the 1860s and 1870s, mainly composed of the lower sectors and the socially marginal. However, this is not surprising if we take into account the rapid changes the city underwent during these years and the gradual transformation of its electoral culture. The city had grown considerably in numbers, from 180,000 in 1860 to 663,854 in 1895, and its inhabitants had experienced a rapid development in their living standards. The middle class grew significantly between 1869 and the 1900s, and, after free and compulsory primary education was introduced in 1884, illiteracy was reduced from a third to 14 percent of the population in twenty-five years.<sup>79</sup> As we have seen, during the 1890s the political parties underwent important changes in their internal organization. The old style of sporadic party organization was gradually replaced by the U.S. system of party committees and conventions with permanent structures and regular meetings. The local committees were the main promoters of the electoral campaigns. Elections themselves also significantly changed. We have mentioned how the violent confrontations of the 1860s and 1870s were gradually replaced by more subtle and alluring means of encouraging the voters to attend the polling stations. It is not surprising, then, that as the physiognomy of the city changed and Buenos Aires's electoral culture became gradually

78 The simple averages quoted may be subject to a bias if the numbers of each occupational group are correlated with the numbers enrolled on the Electoral Register in each ward. However, weighted averages, with weights reflecting ward sizes, change these figures only by at most 3 percent.

79 Germani, *Política y sociedad*, pp. 220-223; A. Prieto, *El discurso criollista en la formación de la Argentina moderna*, Buenos Aires, 1988, pp. 27-34.



Table 5.2. *Pearson's correlation of house prices and occupational groups<sup>a</sup>*

	1892	1894	1895	1896	1898
Group 1	-0.84	-0.84	-0.84	-0.84	-0.64
Group 2	0.71	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.59
Group 3	0.76	0.76	0.75	0.78	0.59

<sup>a</sup>For group descriptions, see Table 5.1.

transformed, elections attracted a greater number of voters from all different social sectors.

How was the electorate spread throughout the city? When analyzing the characteristics of the city of Buenos Aires, it has generally been pointed out that the city offered a remarkable juxtaposition of upper and lower sectors of the population.<sup>80</sup> However, the correlation between the average property price in each electoral ward and occupational groups 1, 2, and 3 presented in Table 5.2 offers few surprises.<sup>81</sup> The strong positive correlation between the house prices and occupational groups 2 and 3 shows a larger presence of these groups in those wards where house prices were higher. The absence of group 1 in the wealthiest areas is reflected by the strong negative correlation. The explanation for this straightforward result, in spite of the alleged high degree of juxtaposition of different

80 For a description of the evolution of Buenos Aires, see J. Scobie, *Buenos Aires: Plaza to Suburb, 1870-1910* (New York, 1974); James Scobie, "The Argentine Capital in the Nineteenth Century," in S.R. Ross and T.F. McGann (eds.), *Buenos Aires: 400 Years*, Austin, Texas, 1982, pp. 40-52. For the development of the house market in Buenos Aires, see Francis Korn and Lidia de la Torre, "La vivienda en Buenos Aires, 1887-1914," *Desarrollo Económico*, vol. 25, N. 98, (July-Sept. 1985), pp. 245-258; C. Sargent, *The Spatial Evolution of Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1870-1930*, Arizona, 1974, pp. 29-30; James Scobie, "Buenos Aires as a Commercial-Bureaucratic City, 1880-1910: Characteristics of a City's Orientation," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 77, N. 4 (Oct. 1972), pp. 1035-1073; F. Korn, *Buenos Aires 1895: Una ciudad moderna*, Buenos Aires, 1981, pp. 11-16, 47-50, 61-64; Jorge Francisco Liernur, "La ciudad efímera: Consideraciones sobre el aspecto material de Buenos Aires; 1870-1910," in J.F. Liernur and Graciela Silvestri, *El umbral de la metrópolis: Transformaciones técnicas y cultura en la modernización de Buenos Aires (1870-1930)*, Buenos Aires, 1993, pp. 177-222; A. Gorelik, *La grilla y el parque: Espacio público y cultura urbana en Buenos Aires, 1887-1936*, Buenos Aires, 1998.

81 Information on house prices in the districts of Buenos Aires was taken from "Transferencia de inmuebles," *Anuario Estadístico de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, Año 1: 1891, Año 2: 1892, Año 3: 1893, Año 4: 1894, Año 5: 1895, Año 6: 1896, Año 7: 1897, Año 8: 1898. The index for property prices was made according to the average price per square meter of all the properties sold and bought each year in each district. It is the only information available in which the information is displayed according to the electoral division of the city. See Appendix 3.

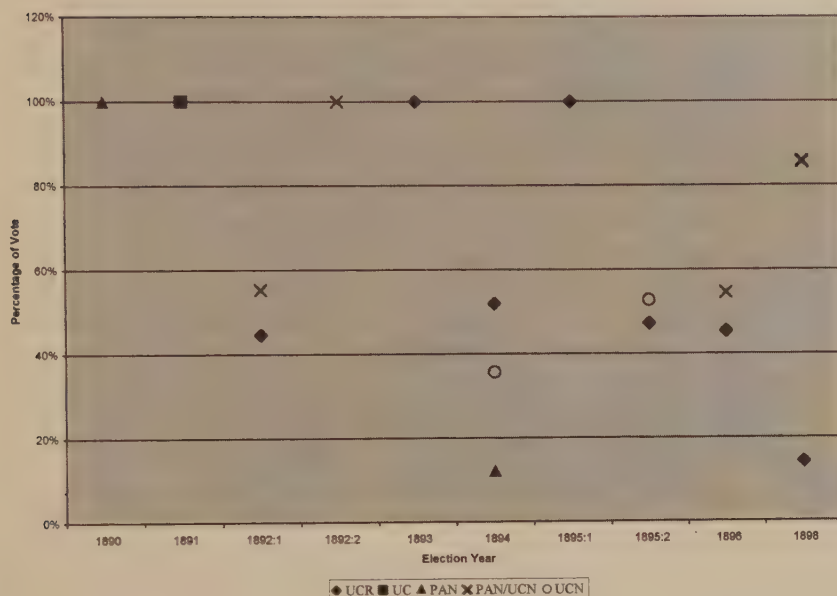


Figure 5.2. Party votes for national elections, city of Buenos Aires, 1890–1898.

sectors of the population, can be found in the absence of immigrants on the Electoral Register. Though the city was characterized by the close contiguity of the rich, the poor, and all the strata between them, the poorest sectors of the population were mainly composed of immigrants who could not vote and were therefore not included in the Electoral Register. It should be noted that these straightforward results also suggest that the Electoral Register was a relatively “clean” one, as “suspicious” large sectors of working-class voters were not found in wealthy areas or vice-versa. Fraud was probably more concentrated in other stages of the electoral process.

Turning to the parties' electoral performances, Figure 5.2 displays the electoral results for all ten national elections that took place in the city of Buenos Aires between 1890 and 1898. If we take into account only the contested elections (1892 (1), 1894, 1895 (2), 1896, 1898), the most outstanding feature is the high degree of party competition. With the exception of the presidential election of 1898, in which the PAN–UCN coalition obtained a comfortable 87 percent of the votes, the PAN–UCN won with only 55 percent of the votes in 1892 (1) and with only 56 percent in 1896. The radicals defeated the PAN–UCN coalition with only 51

percent of the votes in 1894, and was defeated by the UCN, who won 52 percent of the votes in 1895 (2). None of the parties had a comfortable majority. On the contrary, the relatively small margins show that each election had to be furiously contested.

Compilation of the voting returns from each of the sixteen wards of the city of Buenos Aires, shown in Table 5.3, indicates the weakness of regular voting alignments.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, Table 5.4 illustrates not only that none of the parties won consistently in any of the wards, but also that the margins by which they did win were very small.

Considering all the wards in the five contested elections, victories with more than 50 percent of the votes took place only in twenty-two wards out of a total of seventy-nine contested districts. Again, these results challenge the standard interpretation that one party dominated in a system in which fraud and manipulation guarantee electoral results. The outcome of the elections, the absence of electoral alignments, and the relatively small margins of victory in each contested ward reveal a high degree of competition in the city of Buenos Aires in the 1890s. In this context, competition does not necessarily mean "clean" competition. It does mean, however, that the government could not easily manufacture results, that their outcome could not be predicted, and that all parties competed in elections with a chance of success.

What about the electoral performance of the Radical Party in the 1890s? There are three received ideas. It has been generally assumed that the UCR was in no condition to compete in elections against the PAN, and that it therefore had to resort to the strategy of revolution.<sup>83</sup> It has also been pointed out that the main failure of the UCR during this period, and one of the reasons for its short-term decline, was its ineffectiveness in mobilizing the urban population.<sup>84</sup> Finally, the UCR has traditionally been seen as the party that was formed to represent the country's new social forces. Some historians have sustained that the party's main support derived from the middle/upper classes, whereas others placed more emphasis on the "popular sectors."<sup>85</sup> Generally, however, most works have portrayed the

82 New electoral districts were added to the original sixteen after 1894. San Bernardo was created in 1895, San Carlos, del Carmen, and Vélez Sarsfield were added in 1896, and in 1897 the district of Las Heras was created, while Balvanera was split into Balvanera Norte and Balvanera Sud. As the purpose of this paper is to compare the elections of the whole period, the new wards have been left out of this analysis, and in the elections of 1898, Balvanera was counted as one electoral district.

83 Eduardo P. Zannoni, "La abstención Radical," in *Hipólito Yrigoyen. Pueblo y Gobierno*, vol. I, pp. 9, 62.

84 Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, pp. 44, 46.

85 Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, p. 32; E. Gallo and S. Sigal, "La formación de los partidos políticos contemporáneos: La Unión Cívica Radical (1890-1916)," *Desarrollo Económico*, April-September,

Table 5.3. *The winning party by ward, 1890-1898<sup>a</sup>*

	1890	1892:1	1892:2	1893	1894	1895:1	1895:2	1896	1898
1 Caredral N.	PAN	UCR	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN	PAN/UCN
2 Caredral S.	PAN	UCR	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN
3 S. Miguel	PAN	UCR	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN
4 S. Nicolas	PAN	PAN/UCN	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN
5 Monserrat	PAN	UCR	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN	PAN/UCN
6 Piedad	PAN	PAN/UCN	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCN	PAN/UCN	PAN/UCN
7 Balvanera	PAN	UCR	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN	PAN/UCN
8 S. Cristobal	PAN	UCR	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	NA	PAN/UCN	PAN/UCN
9 Socorro	PAN	PAN/UCN	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN	PAN/UCN
10 S. Telmo	PAN	UCR	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN
11 Concepcion	PAN	UCR	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN
12 Sta. Lucia	PAN	PAN/UCN	PAN	UCR	UCN	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN
13 S.J. Evangelista	PAN	PAN/UCN	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCN	PAN/UCN	PAN/UCN
14 Pilar	PAN	PAN/UCN	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN
15 Belgrano	PAN	PAN/UCN	PAN	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN
16 Flores	PAN	PAN/UCN	PAN	UCR	UCN	UCR	UCR	PAN/UCN	PAN/UCN

<sup>a</sup>(PAN) Partido Autonomista Nacional; (UCR) Unión Cívica Radical; (UCN) Unión Cívica Nacional; (NA) not available. Contested elections appear in boldface.



Table 5.4. *Percentage majority in each ward in contested elections, 1892-1898*

	1892/1	1894	1895/2	1896	1898
1 Catedral N.	0.4	12.2	11.3	41.8	61.5
2 Catedral S.	17.9	13.0	52.2	24.6	13.0
3 S. Miguel	5.7	16.6	89.7	2.9	31.7
4 S. Nicolas	8.0	18.9	100.0	41.6	39.4
5 Monserrat	7.1	19.4	83.7	0.2	100.0
6 Piedad	51.8	4.2	83.1	70.7	94.9
7 Balvanera	39.2	32.1	47.7	13.2	60.8
8 S. Cristobal	2.8	34.5	NA <sup>a</sup>	3.7	100.0
9 Socorro	18.8	20.4	83.4	8.7	9.9
10 S. Telmo	24.7	2.4	40.1	34.1	98.4
11 Concepcion	1.9	39.5	43.4	41.5	97.1
12 Sta. Lucia	97.8	0.5	40.8	27.4	69.5
13 S.J. Evangelista	2.8	7.4	82.9	96.1	38.6
14 Pilar	9.1	8.1	24.0	16.8	59.2
15 Belgrano	16.7	11.9	22.5	26.1	88.0
16 Flores	24.2	28.7	1.7	32.2	46.8

<sup>a</sup>(NA) Not available.

UCR as mainly representing the middle-class sectors that had emerged since the 1860s as the result of the country's modernizing process.<sup>86</sup> It has been commonly argued that the social composition of the party's support was one of the main factors that differentiated it from the more elitist PAN.

A number of factors should be taken into account when analyzing the performance of the Radical Party. First, the UCR was a new political party. It began its electoral career as the UC in 1891 and continued independently from the elections of 1892 onward. Second, the electoral system of *lista completa*, or "winner takes all," discriminated against minority parties

1963, N. 1-2, pp. 212-222; L. Allub, *Orígenes del autoritarismo en América Latina*, Buenos Aires, 1983, p. 106; J.A. Ramos, *Revolución y contrarrevolución en Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1965, Vol. 1, pp. 309-399; J.L. Romero, *Historia de las ideas políticas en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1975, pp. 210-216; A. Díaz de Molina, *La oligarquía Argentina: Su filiación y su régimen (1848-1898)*, Buenos Aires, 1972, pp. 347-668; J.F. Sívori, *Fundación de la Unión Cívica Radical*, Buenos Aires, 1959, pp. 13-16; H.H. Gómez, *Significación histórica del radicalismo*, Buenos Aires, 1946, p. 8.

86 L. Sommi, *La Revolución del 90*, Buenos Aires, 1957, p. 336; E. Luna, "UCR. Historia de su pensamiento. El Radicalismo de ayer y de hoy," *Todo es Historia*, N. 289, July 1991, pp. 8-10; P. Snow, *Argentine Radicalism*, Iowa, 1965, p. 14; T.F. McGann, *Argentina, the United States and the Inter-American System, 1880-1914*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957, p. 53, and his *Argentina: The Divided Land*, New Jersey, 1966, p. 33; Germani, *Política y Sociedad*.

as it did not allow for proportional representation. And third, the UCR was the party of opposition and therefore could not count on the resources that were generally available to a party in government, such as the votes of public employees.

If we consider the electoral performance of the Radical Party, the results of Figure 5.2 show that the UCR was actually rather successful in the elections of the city of Buenos Aires. In fact, it represented such a threat that in order to defeat the UCR, the PAN and the UCN were forced to form electoral coalitions against the radicals.<sup>87</sup> These electoral alliances were partially fostered by an electoral system that militated against minority parties and the formation of a multi-party system.<sup>88</sup> However, the tight margins of votes between the PAN-UCN and the radicals as shown in Table 5.4 imply that these electoral coalitions were absolutely necessary if the PAN and the UCN wanted to defeat the UCR. When the PAN and the UCN failed to form electoral coalitions, as in 1894, they lost.

The radicals demonstrated that they were well equipped to compete in elections. The fact that they triumphed only in the contested elections of 1894 should not overshadow the party's performance throughout the decade, as this was partially the result of the electoral system. Considering all wards contested throughout the decade, the Radicals won in 43 of a total of 63 electoral districts contested between 1892 and 1896.<sup>89</sup> It should also be noted that, although the UCR lost to the UCN in 1895, the UCN won the election by resorting to fraud in two electoral districts. In the other contested wards, the UCR comfortably defeated the UCN.<sup>90</sup> The electoral performance of the UCR declined dramatically in 1898. This derived from a conjuncture of events. As discussed below, from the first months of 1896 until the death of Alem in July that year, the party suffered from increasing divisions in its ranks. More significant splits took place in mid-1897, and, finally, only a small faction led by Bernardo de Irigoyen participated in the presidential elections of 1898.

What was the social basis of support for the UCR in the city of Buenos Aires? Table 5.5 shows the correlation between the electoral results of the

87 The UCN and the PAN formed electoral coalitions for the two elections of 1892, and the elections of 1896 and 1898.

88 According to Duverger, in a multi-party regime, simple-majority single-ballot systems encourage strong alliances. Duverger, *Political Parties*, pp. 325-326.

89 Again, 1898 has been excluded, as only a faction of the party contested the elections; it was defeated in all electoral districts. But even if we take into account the election of 1898, the UCR won in 43 out of the 79 wards contested since 1892.

90 In 1895 the UCN concentrated the party's campaign on only two wards and, by the use of extensive fraud, won the elections, given that the electoral system awarded representation to the party that won most votes. The event was an exception in the 1890s and it was widely condemned by the press and by congressmen of all parties. See *La Prensa*, 25 March 1895.

Table 5.5 *Pearson's correlation of occupational groups and votes for the Radical Party in sixteen wards, 1892-1898*

Occupational group <sup>a</sup>	1892	1894	1895	1896	1898
1	-0.36	-0.36	-0.76	-0.34	-0.40
2	0.38	0.31	0.56	0.16	0.40
3	0.36	0.37	0.73	0.29	0.32

<sup>a</sup>For group descriptions, see Table 5.1.

UCR and the occupational groups taken from the Electoral Register of 1896.<sup>91</sup>

The correlation shows that the UCR consistently failed to gain support from the lower sectors of society. Its strength derived from group 3 (which includes lawyers, notaries, doctors, professors, engineers, accountants, military men) and the nonmanual sectors of group 2 (brokers, administrators, industrialists, commission agents, insurance brokers).<sup>92</sup> There appears to be no strong distinction in support for the UCR between groups 2 and 3. Cornblit found similar results in the elections of 1894 in the Province of Buenos Aires where the radicals received stronger support in the most prosperous areas of the province, while the PAN derived its strength from the more backward regions.<sup>93</sup> A similar, although less pronounced pattern can be found in the correlation of votes for the UCR and house prices (Table 5.6). The evidence suggests that the radicals did better in wards where property was more expensive.

A series of conclusions can be drawn regarding the characteristics of the city's electoral life in the last years of the century in general and of the performance of the Radical Party in particular. The standard accounts of Argentina's political development have reduced nineteenth-century elec-

91 It should be noted that even though the electoral data cover an eight-year period we can count only on the Electoral Register of 1896. While ideally we should use more Electoral Registers of the period, this information is not available. We can only assume that the composition of the electorate did not change throughout the period; there is no obvious reason to think that it did.

92 For the complete list of professions included in these categories, see Szuchman and Sofer, "The State of Social Stratification," Appendix B (high professional and low professional categories).

93 Oscar Cornblit, "La opción conservadora en la República Argentina," *Desarrollo Económico*, vol. 14, n 56 (1975), pp. 619-621. With data for 1912 and 1916, and using a "modernization" index which included literacy, urbanization, and foreign population, Gallo and Sigal found positive correlations between "modernization" and electoral support for the UCR. These correlations were done for each province. Gallo and Sigal, "La formación," pp. 153-154.

Table 5.6. *Pearson's correlation of house prices and electoral results of the Radical Party in sixteen wards, 1892-1898*

1892	1894	1895	1896	1898
0.27	0.20	0.54	0.05	0.51

toral politics to a simple account of repression by the elite. The 1912 reform has also been interpreted as an abrupt transition from a restrictive democratic system to a modern democracy. One of the main pitfalls of the pre-reform system is thought to have been its failure to provide for the gradual development of political parties and the gradual improvement of the electoral practices. It is claimed that, overnight, turnouts for national elections more than tripled, new social forces were included in the political system, elections were abruptly transformed from exclusive to inclusive affairs, and parties for the first time had to appeal to an electorate for votes instead of just relying on corruption and manipulation. Furthermore, many argued that the suddenness of this transition was responsible for the failure of the country's new democracy, which, unable to cope, was curtailed by a military coup in 1930.<sup>94</sup>

There is always a danger in extrapolating from the 1890s to 1912, and further work is needed on the first decades of the twentieth century to enable one to arrive at firmer conclusions regarding the transition to a modern democratic system. However, a closer inspection of the electoral results of the 1890s in Buenos Aires and of the *porteño* voters indicates that elections were highly competitive and involved all the sectors of the population. Even new political parties, such as the UCR, had a good chance of electoral success. This is not to say that elections in the 1890s closely resembled those after 1912. In the 1890s the vote was not secret, voters were at times intimidated, and violence and fraud were a common part of the voting process.<sup>95</sup> However, these features of nineteenth-century elections did not rule out party competition and the participation of all sectors of the population, at least for the city of Buenos Aires.

As we mentioned before, it would be wrong to extrapolate the findings on Buenos Aires to the rest of the country. However, in the case of the federal capital, and taking into account the new evidence of the 1890s, we

<sup>94</sup> This argument is fully developed in Remmer, *Party Competition*, pp. 24-34, 221-222.

<sup>95</sup> It should be noted, however, that some of these features did not disappear overnight from the post-1912 electoral practices.



can see that the reform of 1912 was a significant step in expanding the number of voters, given that voting became compulsory.<sup>96</sup> But this was not primarily a matter of including previously neglected social sectors in the electorate. It was not the case that in 1912 the elite "allowed" the participation of the middle and working classes for the first time or that the middle and upper classes were now forced to abandon their previous indifference. The features of 1890s electoral practice in Buenos Aires – well-organized political parties contesting competitive elections involving all sectors of the population with some evidence of choice in their voting preferences – point to a more gradual process of political development in the city.

The Radical Party of the 1890s was a more successful electoral organization than it has been assumed. It proved to have a good party structure, ready to compete against the PAN and the UCN, showing good mobilization skills. It should not be forgotten that it was a new political party, that it had the disadvantage of being in opposition, and that the electoral system discriminated against minority parties. Taking these factors into account, it can be argued that the party's electoral performance for most of the decade was good. We have also seen that the party failed to gain the support of the lower classes and that its electoral strength derived mainly from the middle and upper sectors and from the wealthier districts of the city. However, we should not accept easy conclusions regarding the socio-economic basis of the political parties' electoral support in the 1890s. The correlation between the UCR and the occupational groups, although constant throughout the period, oscillates between 0.30 and 0.40 and is therefore not sufficiently strong to enable us to claim that social status was a crucial factor in determining the political preferences of the *porteño* voters. Only in the 1910s and 1920s did the relationship between class and party preference become more pronounced.<sup>97</sup> Although historians and political scientists have argued that socio-economic factors were crucial to the emergence of the UCR in the 1890s, the formation of the party can be more realistically explained by looking at other factors such as political circumstance and ideological clashes.

### Radicals in Congress

The electoral success of the Radical Party in the city and Province of Buenos Aires in 1894 sent, for the first time, a significant number of party members to Congress. The Argentine Congress was divided in two cham-

96 For the impact of the 1912 reform on the turnouts of national elections, see Alonso, "Voting in Buenos Aires," pp. 188–189.

97 See Walter, "Elections," pp. 610–624.

bers. The Senate, whose role was to represent the provinces, was composed of two members elected by the legislature of each province, and two elected by the federal capital. The Constitution required senators to be Argentine males over thirty years of age and to enjoy a stipulated annual rent or income. Senators were elected for terms of nine years and a third of the House was renewed every three years. The Chamber of Deputies, which represented the people, was filled by direct elections and the territorial distributions of seats was based on population density. Candidates for this chamber needed to be Argentine citizens over twenty-five years of age and were elected for terms of four years. Half of the Chamber of Deputies was renewed every two years. The Argentine Congress enjoyed powers similar to those of the U.S. Congress; it could, among other things, initiate laws, impeach the president, and call cabinet ministers to be questioned on particular policies.<sup>98</sup>

While a detailed study of the role of the Congress at the turn of the century is not yet available, there has been a general tendency to play down its importance in the country's institutional and political history. The constitutional powers bestowed on the national executive have led many to believe that Congress lacked independence and autonomy. Furthermore, the political predominance of the PAN since 1880 has reinforced the assumption that, at the turn of the century, Congress was a subservient institution.<sup>99</sup> It is believed to have been a branch of government "not widely used as a forum for the expression of interests" in a political system where "most significant decisions were made by *acuerdos* [deals]."<sup>100</sup>

However, the late nineteenth-century Congress was not a rubber stamp for decisions taken by the national executive, nor was it its submissive partner.<sup>101</sup> The national executive needed the support of the Congress to govern, and presidents of the 1880–1916 period knew that they could not always count on it. In the 1890s alone, President Juárez Celman was forced to resign by a PAN-dominated Congress, Julio A. Roca failed to convince his fellow senators to vote him for the presidency of the Senate in 1892, and Luis Sáenz Peña had to abandon the presidency in 1895 after Congress withdraw its support. For only a few months a year was the presi-

98 On the functioning and functions of the Argentine Congress, see the Argentine National Constitution (1853), Part II, "Del Poder Legislativo."

99 Cullen-Crisol, "Electoral Practices," p. 47; Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, p. 29.

100 The quotation comes from P. Smith, "The Breakdown of Democracy in Argentina, 1916–1930," in J. Linz (ed.), *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Latin America*, Maryland and London, 1978, Vol. III, p. 9.

101 For the few studies that enhance the role of Congress during this period, see L.C. Fennell's "Congress in the Argentine Political System: An Appraisal," in W.H. Agor (ed.), *Latin American Legislatures: Their Role and Influence. Analyses for the Countries*, New York, 1971, p. 144, and N.G. Molinelli, *Presidentes y Congresos en Argentina: Mitos y realidades*, Buenos Aires, 1991.

dent free from congressional control. The Constitution established a legislative period of ordinary sessions to run between 1 May and 30 September. This period was regularly extended until mid-December, as the president generally called for extraordinary sessions. Because of the punctuality and regularity with which ordinary and extraordinary sessions took place at the turn of the century in comparison to later years, this period became later known as the "golden age of Congress."<sup>102</sup>

Indeed, the powerful role that the Congress enjoyed in the 1890s, a role which it would lose in the following century, was the result of three combined factors: (1) the nature of the political parties, (2) the role of the press, and (3) the particular political conjuncture.

As described earlier, all three parties were at the time in a transitional stage, changing from loose networks of interests into organized political parties with permanent structures and written rules for their internal functioning.<sup>103</sup> In such a network of interests individual loyalty had to be constantly won and kept, checked and rewarded, and disloyalties punished. In this bargaining process, deputies and senators enjoyed a personal independence and a negotiating power that was later to decline when parties acquired more permanent structures and when the voting behavior of their representatives in Congress became more disciplined. The PAN was, at the time, the best example of a loose organization whose members' behavior in Congress was erratic and whose voting patterns could not be taken for granted by the party leaders.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, party members in the late nineteenth century professed a concept of representation different from that upheld by twentieth-century congressmen. As Bernardo de Irigoyen pointed out in the Senate:

I do not agree with what I think is a dangerous theory. . . . I do not believe that those who sit in the National Congress, even though their candidacies had been raised by the political parties, should behave as members of those groups. I sustain that, once the scrutiny of the elections is over, the citizens whose candidacies have been sponsored by the parties, have no right to favor the interests of these parties.<sup>105</sup>

To place party interests over the interests of the whole nation was considered a serious danger to the country's institutions. Therefore, strict voting discipline of party members was not expected or demanded.

The role of the Congress as a national forum was enhanced by its relation with the press. All the main political newspapers of the time devoted

102 Molinelli, *Presidentes y Congresos en Argentina*, p. 111.

103 See Chapter 3.

104 For the role of the Congress during Roca's first administration and for the behavior of the members of the PAN in Congress, see L.B. Kress, "Julio A. Roca and Argentina, 1880-1916: A Political and Economic Study," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1971, pp. 124-126.

105 *DSCS*, 27 September, 1894, p. 545.

large sections to the debates, both significant and insignificant, that were taking place in Congress. As each daily represented a party faction, the role of these newspapers was to report on the content of the speeches, and to enhance the performance of party members while attacking that of the opposition. The dailies also transformed the technical and often tedious debates into a more accessible language, simplifying for a wider audience the issues at stake. The press offered to congressmen a means by which they could reach a wide audience in an easy, fast, and inexpensive way, as these papers were distributed throughout the country. However, the relationship between the dailies and Congress was not one-way, simply reproducing the congressional debates. At times, it was the press which would launch a campaign on a particular issue which was later introduced as a project for legislation by one of the parties.<sup>106</sup>

During 1894, the role of the Congress as a legislative body, as a national forum, and a source of accountability of the national executive was enhanced by a series of particular circumstances. The year 1894 was the first in the decade when "gun-fire was not heard and when not even unfounded rumors of revolutionary conspiracies circulated."<sup>107</sup> While during 1893 the focus of attention had been the frequent revolutionary outbreaks, during the peaceful year of 1894, Congress became the focal point of national politics. The Congress of 1894 was an exceptionally "fresh" one. Out of a total of eighty-six seats in the Chamber of Deputies, forty-two seats were filled in early 1894, after elections took place in all five provinces that had been federally intervened. After resounding electoral victories the radicals sent twelve representatives to the Chamber of Deputies, a number that increased to sixteen in 1895.<sup>108</sup> In the Senate, Bernardo de Irigoyen was a lone, but highly effective, radical voice. As the incorporation of a significant number of radicals in Congress took place, public expectations rose and a heated parliamentary period was expected.<sup>109</sup>

How did the UCR perform in Congress once it achieved such representation? The Constitution established that drafts for legislation could be

106 That was the case, for example, of the campaign initiated by *La Prensa* in 1897 to adapt the representation in Congress to the new National Census of 1895, an important issue that was soon after introduced and approved in Congress. See *La Prensa*, 5, 7, 17, 19, 25, 26, 31 July 1897. For the reform, see also R. Etchepareborda, "Las presidencias de Uriburu y Roca," in Ferrari, *La Argentina del ochenta*, pp. 269-270.

107 "Retrospectivo de 1894," *La Prensa*, 1 January 1895.

108 The radicals newly elected in 1894 were Carlos Tejedor, Cornelio Saavedra Zavaleta, Francisco A. Barroetaveña, and Teodoro García for the federal capital; Francisco Ayerza, Martín Irigoyen, Adolfo Moutier, Eugenio Uballes, Manuel A. Ocampo, Alfredo Demarchi, Delfor del Valle, and Felipe F. Pérez for the Province of Buenos Aires.

109 "Retrospectivo de 1894," *La Prensa*, 1 January 1895.



introduced in the Congress by the national executive or by congressmen themselves. The representatives of the Radical Party introduced six out of a total of forty-five bills initiated by members of the Chamber of Deputies in 1894, and twelve out of fifty-eight in 1895. The content of the radicals' drafts revealed a recurrent theme: to restrict the institutional devices that could be, and frequently were, employed by the national government for partisan purpose. This was the goal behind the proposals for further regulation of federal interventions, for removing the national army from the provinces and placing it on the frontiers during times of peace, for transferring legal proceedings against soldiers involved in uprisings from the military to the civil courts, for stricter control of enrollment in the Electoral Registers, and for restraining members of Congress from simultaneously holding employment in the executive branch of the national government.<sup>110</sup>

The only proposal introduced by the radicals which received the final approval of Congress was Alem's bill for the amendment of the electoral law.<sup>111</sup> This bill was not a profound reform of the electoral system. It was introduced as a temporary measure to improve voting procedures on election days and to facilitate the control of fraudulent enrollment in the Electoral Registers by reducing their number from 500 to 250 per page.<sup>112</sup> The government had already introduced a more profound electoral reform bill which was also firmly supported by the Radical Party.<sup>113</sup> However, as the treatment of this reform was postponed for the following year, Alem's bill was approved as a temporary amendment until the more substantial reform could be discussed. Alem's bill did not gain much public attention, nor did it show a deep ideological divide between the radicals and the other political forces and it was not an issue in which the UCR invested a considerable campaign. All of these conditions were instead fulfilled by the radicals' campaign in favor of economic freedom.

After their defeat in the revolutions of 1893 the radicals diverted party

<sup>110</sup> *DSCD*, 6 June 1894, p. 63; 22 August 1894, pp. 566–569; 10 September 1894, p. 733; 28 September 1894, p. 1021; 13 September 1895, p. 682.

<sup>111</sup> It has generally been assumed that the Radicals wanted the introduction of the system of proportional representation. The Radicals, however, never proposed such a system during the period under study, and, as it was pointed out by Cornblit, the party members held highly different views on electoral systems; some even argued for the introduction of literacy requirements for voters. Cornblit, "La opción conservadora," pp. 636–637.

<sup>112</sup> The same project had already been introduced by Alem in the Senate during the sessions of 1891. While it was approved in the Senate it was rejected in the Chamber of Deputies. For the project and its discussion, see *DSCD*, 13 September 1895, pp. 812–813.

<sup>113</sup> The government's proposal had already been introduced in Congress in August 1895. It was a radical reform proposing the division of the federal capital and the provinces into electoral districts with a "first past the post" electoral system. The project also included the amendment to the Electoral Registers proposed by Alem.

propaganda from politics to economics. Since its foundation, the UCR had concentrated its campaign on institutional and political matters. However, during 1894, their strategy was to concentrate their opposition to the government on economic issues by promoting a debate in favor of free trade. Since its origins, the Radical Party had sporadically attacked the banking system and government intervention in the economy.<sup>114</sup> For a year, however, between the end of the revolutions of 1893 until the end of the debate in Congress on custom tariffs in late 1894, the UCR pushed the party's campaign in favor of free trade to the forefront of the political debate.<sup>115</sup> This change in party strategy was probably the result of the repressive politics of Quintana, which left little opportunity for political debate. It was also the result of the internal struggle that developed inside the UCR after the revolutions of 1893. What was significant, in any case, was that the new campaign on economic issues exposed another significant ideological conflict between the UCR and the PAN.

A comprehensive history of economic debates in Argentina in the late nineteenth century is still lacking.<sup>116</sup> In the particular case of the Radical Party, its economic discourse has been greatly neglected. Furthermore, it has been erroneously assumed that the radicals were the defenders of protectionist principles against the laissez-faire economic policies of the PAN in general and of Juárez Celman's administration in particular.<sup>117</sup> However, it was the other way around. It was the PAN, not the UCR, that embraced and defended the doctrine of protectionism as a means of developing national industries, while the radicals protested against state intervention in the economy.

The first debate on protectionist tariffs after the country's constitutional organization had taken place during 1875 and 1876. The first deep eco-

114 See, for example, "Bancos oficiales y emisionismo," *La Prensa*, 24 November 1891, and *El Argentino*, 14 September 1893.

115 The most interesting newspaper editorials of the Radical's campaign can be found in *El Argentino*, 14 September 1893, 30 November, 29 March, 14, 22, and 24 August, 3 November 1894.

116 The few exceptions had mainly concentrated on the congressional debate of 1875-76. On this see: J.C. Chiaramonte, *Nacionalismo y liberalismo económicos en Argentina, 1860-1880*, Buenos Aires, 1971, pp. 188-192; A. Dorfman, *Historia de la industria argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1942, pp. 97-102; D.J. Guy, "Carlos Pellegrini and the Politics of Early Argentine Industrialisation, 1873-1906," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 11, N. 1, May 1979, pp. 126-128; E. Corbière, "En el inicio de la Argentina moderna," *Todo es Historia*, Año XII, N. 149, October, 1979, pp. 31-37. For the history of customs, see J. Alvarez, *Las guerras civiles argentinas*, Buenos Aires, 1966, pp. 81-100. Previous debates on protectionism in Argentina can be found in Chiaramonte, *Nacionalismo*, pp. 10-15, 82-89; M.A. Scenna, "En el inicio del poder colonial," *Todo es Historia*, Año XII, N. 149, October, 1979, pp. 9-23; J.C. Nicolás, "En vísperas de la organización," *Todo es Historia*, Año XII, N. 149, October, 1979, pp. 24-30.

117 For a reappraisal of this standard interpretation, see Duncan, "Government by Audacity," pp. 101-116, 258-267. For a brief analysis on the main issues debated in the 1890s, see Botana and Gallo, "Estudio preliminar," pp. 71-78.

conomic crisis in late nineteenth-century Argentina (1873–1876) had aroused public concern about the country's dependence on imported manufactured goods and the underdevelopment of its national industries.<sup>118</sup> For the first time, after an intense debate in Congress, the government introduced protectionist tariffs with the explicit objective of protecting incipient national industries. Previously, custom tariffs had had the specific purpose of providing the national government with revenue. The PAN claimed to be the heir of the new protectionist trend started in the mid-1870s, and *Tribuna* proudly stated that, "on economic matters [the PAN] has always been protectionist."<sup>119</sup>

In 1894 a debate over general principles of political economy was precipitated by another economic crisis. Early that year it became known that, contrary to public expectations, trade figures for imports and exports for 1893 had fallen 7.5 percent; that meant a decrease in the revenue from the Custom House, which had severe implications for the public income. President Sáenz Peña issued a decree in January 1894 to bring about the formation of a commission to study the consequent government deficit and to come up with a solution.<sup>120</sup> In November 1894 Finance Minister José A. Terry introduced in the Chamber of Deputies a government report recommending a 10 percent reduction (from 60 to 50%) in the duties of imports of a series of goods to be approved by Congress. The objective was to increase the volume of imports and to augment government resources. The proposal brought about one of the most confrontational debates on the country's economic policies since the mid-1870s. For the defenders of free trade, the reduction was not low enough. What the country needed was a more radical reduction, or even the complete elimination, of customs tariffs to establish complete freedom of trade. For the defenders of protectionism, the reduction was too high and left national industries insufficiently protected against cheap foreign goods.

Francisco Barroetaveña undertook the role of defending the radicals' free trade arguments in Congress, while Eliseo Cantón, a deputy from Tucumán, was the main exponent of the PAN's protectionist views. Protectionists and free traders appealed to the same sources to defend their positions: the National Constitution, the country's economic tradition,

118 For the history of the development of Argentine industries, see Dorfman, *Historia de la industria*, pp. 102–167; V. Vázquez-Presedo, "La evolución industrial (Argentina, 1880–1910)," in Ferrari, *La Argentina del ochenta*, pp. 406–417; Fernando Rocchi, "Building a Nation, Building a Market: Industrial Growth and the Domestic Economy in the Turn-of-the-Century Argentina," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1977.

119 *Tribuna*, 4 November 1895.

120 *The Economist*, 24 March 1894. See also *The Economist*, 5 May 1894. *DSCD*, 8 October 1894, pp. 56–60.

general principles of political economy, the examples of more developed countries, and common sense.

The constitutional argument revolved around the following question: Did the National Constitution restrict the use of customs tariffs to fiscal purposes, or did it allow to its use as a means to protect and help the development of national industries? It became evident, however, that the Constitution allowed for different readings. Protectionists argued that Article 67, subsection 16, stated that it was the role of the Congress to "provide what is necessary for the prosperity of the country . . . promoting industry . . . [and] the birth and establishment of new industries." Therefore, customs tariffs could be used to fulfill the constitutional aim of developing national industries.<sup>121</sup> However, Barroetaveña offered an alternative interpretation of the same constitutional article. While he accepted that the promotion of industrialization was a constitutional goal, the means to achieve it was not through the adoption of protectionist policies, but by facilitating transport and credit to the new industries.<sup>122</sup> Although the Constitution was imprecise regarding the means by which industrialization could be achieved, he argued that its spirit was one of economic freedom. Barroetaveña claimed that this was clearly stated in Article 4 and Article 67, subsection 1, where it was laid down that the customs duties could be introduced only as a source of national revenue.<sup>123</sup> And while Barroetaveña quoted Alberdi as the inspirational source for the constitutional spirit of economic freedom, protectionists pointed toward the United States, a country which had introduced protectionist measures, as the source of Argentina's constitutional model.<sup>124</sup>

Looking at the country's past in search for support for his present argument, the radical deputy maintained that Argentina had always enjoyed a tradition of economic freedom. Barroetaveña argued that the country's independence had been largely the result of a movement against the colony's protectionist measures and in favor of the principles of freedom of trade. It was only during Rosas's government that the principles of economic freedom had been temporarily abandoned, but they had been reinstated as soon as the country was constitutionally organized. When customs duties were introduced under the administrations of Urquiza, Derqui, Mitre, Sarmiento, Avellaneda, and Roca, it had been for the sole purpose of providing for the government's revenue and not as means of protecting local industries. Barroetaveña also stressed that Juárez Celman's administration had been the first to betray Argentina's tradition of economic freedom, and the result had been the country's deepest ever eco-

121 *DSCD*, 9 November 1894, p. 495. 122 *DSCD*, 22 November 1894, p. 648.

123 *DSCD*, 9 November 1894, p. 487; 21 November 1894, pp. 622–623.

124 *DSCD*, 22 November 1894, pp. 648 and 655.



conomic crisis.<sup>125</sup> In contrast, Cantón argued that Argentina's economic tradition was not of free trade but of protectionism. If originally the application of protectionist measures had been unnecessary, given that cattle breeding prospered without them, the recent agricultural boom in areas such as Santa Fe had been made possible only thanks to the protectionist policies adopted in the previous two decades.<sup>126</sup>

The supporters of protectionism and the defenders of freedom of trade also appealed to general principles of political economy quoting from a range of foreign authors popular at the time (such as Henry George),<sup>127</sup> as well as Argentine writers (mainly Alberdi and Vicente Fidel López). Free traders argued that protectionism made the economy deviate from its natural course, fostered the creation of artificial industry, increased the price of consumer goods, penalized the working class in particular, was an obstacle to the development of the industrial sector, isolated the country from the international economy, could result in international tariff wars, and produced an excessive proliferation of consumer goods, which ultimately resulted in economic crisis.<sup>128</sup> "Our economic prosperity does not consist of producing everything," Barroetaveña claimed, "but in consuming good quality and inexpensive goods."<sup>129</sup>

On the other side of the fence, protectionists claimed that all new countries needed high tariffs to protect their industries.<sup>130</sup> National industries deserved to be protected because they had a positive effect on employment and a "civilizing" effect on society (because they demanded knowledge and up-to-date research), and, historically, protectionism had never resulted in an international tariff war.<sup>131</sup> Although free trade could result in price reductions in consumer goods, it was added, it could also result in high unemployment.<sup>132</sup> Congressmen used examples from other countries in their arguments. While free traders argued that the United States, England, and France were good examples of nations which flourished under the principles of economic freedom, protectionists replied that these countries had adopted free trade policies only after years of protecting their national industries.<sup>133</sup>

The debate about protectionism and free trade was not confined to Congress. Indeed, the press had been campaigning on this issue and taken posi-

125 *DSCD*, 21 November 1894, p. 624; 22 November 1894, pp. 652–653.

126 *DSCD*, 9 November 1894, p. 495.

127 Henry George's (1839–1897) work *Progress and Poverty* (1879) was highly influential at the time.

128 *DSCD*, 9 November 1894, pp. 488–489; 21 November, pp. 636 and 638–639; 22 November 1894, pp. 632–636 and 644–645.

129 *DSCD*, 9 November 1894, p. 489. 130 *DSCD*, 13 November 1894, p. 527.

131 *DSCD*, 9 November 1894, pp. 497, 499, 503; 14 November 1894, p. 540.

132 *DSCD*, 9 November 1894, p. 497.

133 *DSCD*, 21 November 1894, p. 632; 9 November 1894, p. 500; 13 November 1894, p. 525.

tions since early 1894. While the debate in the Lower House was taking place, the dailies printed the arguments used in each session and published editorials in which the main issues were put into more ordinary language for the reader. *El Argentino* offers perhaps the best example of this strategic combination of technical analysis in favor of free trade with the use of a more accessible vocabulary.<sup>134</sup> For the first time, they also directed their rhetoric toward the working class:

When the worker returns home, tired after a hard day at work, he will only placate his thirst with low quality wines due to the tariff war sustained against the imported ones. . . . Remembering his home country, he will want a jug of conserved food from his home, but he will not be able buy it because they cost "an eye of the face" as we vulgarly say. . . . Does he want to cover his head with an imported hat? Impossible!!! Only the very rich can now afford them as they cost around twenty-five and thirty pesos. He will be forced to use the hats produced in the country which are generally sold as if they were imported, something that is done either with the intention of favoring the middle man between the producer and the consumer or to hide the hats' loose threads. As he cannot live shoeless he will either have to get his shoes made with national leather, in which case his toes will be uncovered within a month, or he could also choose foreign leather but this will triple their price.<sup>135</sup>

Since its formation, the UCR had accused the PAN of corrupting the country's institutional and political traditions; to these charges was now added the betrayal of Argentina's traditional economic policies:

As if the embarrassment, clumsiness and political arbitrariness that today discredit and destroy us were not enough, the men from the conservative party, of the party of order, have come to ignore all the economic principles, to mock all the laws of financial science, raising the prices of merchandise with absurd and irritating tariffs, making the import and traffic of goods into the capital of the Republic virtually impossible.<sup>136</sup>

*La Nación*, on the other hand, given the role the UCN was playing in the political scene, took no committed position. In the past, and particularly during the debate of 1876, the newspaper had played an important part as a defender of free trade principles.<sup>137</sup> Now, however, as the mouthpiece of the UCN, it was caught in the pivotal position the party had fallen into: at times critical but in general supportive of the government it had helped to put in power. While, with extreme caution, *La Nación* timidly pointed out the potential dangers of exaggerated protectionism, it echoed

134 See, for example, *El Argentino*, 14 September 1893 and 22 August 1894.

135 "El Argentino," 27 August 1894, reprinted by P. Alonso in *Libertas*, Año VIII, N. 15, October 1991, pp. 245-249.

136 *El Argentino*, 6 March 1893. See also Barroetaveña's speech in *DSCD*, 16 November 1894, p. 624.

137 For the role of *La Nación* as well as other newspapers during the debate of 1876, see Chiaramonte, *Nacionalismo y liberalismo*, p. 200.

the position taken by the UCN's representatives in Congress, stating that the government's proposal "in this moment reconciles the requirements of some industries with the general convenience not to sacrifice them."<sup>138</sup>

*Tribuna* loudly proclaimed its protectionist pedigree. The PAN's daily unnecessarily conceded that "there is nothing more difficult than theoretically to sustain the justice and the equanimity of protectionism"<sup>139</sup> and proclaimed that, despite what the radicals believed, the experience of Argentina spoke for itself:

If the effects that protectionism had had among us were to be studied in detail, we would reach the conviction that it had favored the development of top line industries and it had helped toward the founding of many others. . . . For some years we consumed bread bought abroad and taxed with import duties, and now (that we produce it ourselves) we have the bread warranted for ourselves and our descendants. . . . We had put up with high taxes on exotic wines, but, thanks to that, the vine regions of the republic have undoubtedly been multiplied and rapidly extended.<sup>140</sup>

And the long list of the achievements of protectionism extended, according to *Tribuna*, to the local production of textiles, linen, perfumery, chemical products, hats, crystal, shoes, and *alpargatas* (rope-soled sandals).

The protectionism versus free trade debate filled the newspapers' editorials for months, attracting exceptional public attention. The debate on broad economic principles was, however, followed by long and tedious sessions in the Chamber of Deputies, where members had to discuss and vote on the duties of each particular item. By then, public attention on the debate had greatly diminished. Nevertheless, the confrontation with the PAN on economic policy that had consumed the public arena during most of 1894 was of great significance for the Radical Party. It showed that the UCR was not only a party of revolution and that its concerns could expand beyond a heated attack against the government's electoral politics and its corruption of the country's institutions. The debate also exposed a significant ideological division between the radicals and the PAN. This significance did not derive from the extreme antagonism of the contending arguments. After all, the discussion was confined to the use of custom tariffs, and while it shows disagreement on economic policy, it also reveals that this did not expand into an alternative proposal for the country's economic development. The importance of the different points of view of the

138 *La Nación*, 27 December 1894. See also Mitre's view that the project had only a moderate protectionist tendency in *DSCS*, 26 December 1894, p. 1011. It should be pointed out, however, that *La Nación* adopted a more critical view of the protectionist policies of the government during 1895 (*La Nación*, 30 March 1895), and particularly during the debate on protectionist tariffs for sugar and wine that took place in 1897 (*La Nación*, 15 and 21 April 1897).

139 *Tribuna*, 1 July 1892. 140 Ibid.

UCR and the PAN on protectionist tariffs exposed during 1894 does not lie in the deepness of the disagreement but in the fact that, once again, the disagreement between the two parties was irreconcilable. While the UCR based its arguments for economic freedom on the benefits for the consumer, the PAN based its opinions on protectionist policies on the defense of national industries. On these two arguments it was difficult to reach compromise.

Congress was also the floor of another crucial confrontation between the radicals and the government. The event took place during the last ordinary sessions of the Senate in September 1894 and the contenders were the radical Senator Bernardo de Irigoyen and the Minister of Interior Manuel Quintana.

On 22 September 1894, Irigoyen requested the presence of Manuel Quintana at the Senate, to explain his policies on national security imposed in October 1893 and maintained throughout 1894. The Constitution bestowed upon congressmen the faculty to invite Cabinet ministers to the chamber to be questioned over particular policies. Congressmen did not have veto powers over the ministers or any capacity to sanction the policies undertaken. However, an interpellation (as the procedure was known) was a common device used by opposition members to raise public attention over a particular issue. And although ministers did not fear any particular sanction as such, interpellations placed them in a defensive role as they were forced to explain and publicly to justify their policies.

Given that an interpellation was a powerful institutional tool, Irigoyen's request was surrounded by high public expectations. Since early 1894 there had often been rumors that Irigoyen intended to call the minister to the chamber, but the radical senator patiently waited until almost the end of the legislative year finally to petition the attendance of Quintana at the Senate. And although some questioned Irigoyen's delay, he proved to be right in his timing.<sup>141</sup> It was not until the spring of 1894 that Congress's support for Minister Quintana began to show the first cracks, and only then could Irigoyen count on sufficient will in the Senate and in the press publicly to question the minister's repressive policies.

The interpellation lasted for three long sessions. On 22 September, Quintana was asked to explain his reasons for maintaining the state of siege in the federal capital and in the Provinces of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe until April 1894. Quintana was also asked to clarify the content of the instructions he had given to those conducting federal interventions in the provinces that had experienced revolts, since the rumor was that the minister had instructed them to purge the radicals from the public administration and to promote local political alliances between the PAN and the

141 *La Nación* was the most critical of Irigoyen's timing. See 27 September 1894.



UCN. In addition, Quintana was asked to justify the maintenance of a military intervention in Tucumán after order had been restored in that province. The implication behind this formal interrogation of the Minister of Interior was that he had breached the Constitution by using institutional tools for his own party benefits.

In the course of his argument Senator Irigoyen claimed that the federal interventions in Buenos Aires, San Luis, and Santa Fe had been unconstitutional, given that under these federal interventions the members of the UCR had been unfairly harassed and had been expelled from public office.<sup>142</sup> Irigoyen also questioned the government's untimely declaration of a state of siege in August 1893, imposed once the revolutionary outbreaks had been repressed.<sup>143</sup> The radical senator also argued against the exceptional severity of the state of siege, under which citizens were jailed in inhuman conditions without being granted their request to be deported; a few radicals had been forced to seek exile simply for sending Alem a telegram of support while he was in prison; and other radical sympathizers in San Juan and Córdoba had been arrested even though there had been no disturbances in those provinces. The radical senator claimed that the repression of the press had also been unnecessarily harsh. The UCR's newspaper had been censored and some of their directors had been deported to Montevideo.<sup>144</sup> "When governments are no longer ruled by the principles, the doctrines, the spirit and the letter of the Constitution," Irigoyen argued, "when governments proceed by their personal passions, by party preferences, by unjustified influences, they fall into contradictions, into dysfunction, into committing indefensible acts that have no fidelity with the Constitution."<sup>145</sup>

Initially, Minister Quintana calmly responded to these charges, arguing that the exceptional condition of disorder in the country during the revolutions of 1893 had rendered these measures absolutely necessary. However, Quintana's performance was unconvincing. He was ill, tired, and his voice could hardly be heard. More significant, when he realized he could not redress the negative impact of Irigoyen's charges he turned his argument and launched a personal attack on Irigoyen:

I know a kind of man, old and with mild character, who adorns with his position and his name the committees of any political party, even of an extreme one. Wise and experienced, he never commits himself entirely and always ignores the demagogic machinations of his

142 DSCS, 22 September 1894, pp. 506–507, 554, 564, 568. For the exceptional nature of the federal interventions of 1893 in the country's constitutional and political history, see Sommariva, *Historia de las intervenciones*, Vol. II, pp. 222–260.

143 DSCD, 22 September 1894, pp. 569–570. For the restrictions imposed on the country under state of siege, see Sommariva, *Historia de las intervenciones*, Vol. II, pp. 222.

144 DSCS, 28 September 1894, pp. 571–574. 145 DSCS, 27 September 1894, p. 551.

party fellows. If his adventures do not succeed, he believes to have the right to remain respected and calm in the bosom of the gods; if his attempts triumph he cannot wait to sit down to the victory banquet.<sup>146</sup>

Quintana's tactic backfired on him.<sup>147</sup> Public opinion decisively shifted against him and, arguing ill-health, Quintana asked to be granted a few days to recover after which he claimed he would continue with his defense. While Irigoyen had avoided any personal attack on the minister and based his arguments on constitutional principles, Quintana had done just the opposite. The result had been disastrous for him. After a few days of seclusion in the countryside, Quintana announced that he could not return to the chamber to pursue his defense. His public image was deeply damaged by the event, and less than three months later he was forced to resign from his ministerial post.

The radicals boldly attributed this resignation to Irigoyen's performance in Congress. The party claimed all responsibility for Quintana and Sáenz Peña's downfall, portraying it as their great political triumph. However, while Irigoyen's interpellation was a significant blow for Quintana's public image, his resignation was largely the work of the PAN. Once it became known that Quintana was prematurely preparing the grounds for his candidacy for the presidential election of 1898, the PAN hurried to withhold their support, first from the minister and then from the president. What was ultimately at stake was a public dispute over the leadership of the two parties of the electoral agreement, the PAN and the UCN, and over the next presidential election for the period 1898–1904. A local conflict between the governor and the legislature of the Province of Mendoza raised this dispute to the surface and provoked an open confrontation between Quintana and Roca.<sup>148</sup> The challenge took place on the floor of Congress over a federal intervention in Mendoza. Roca wanted the intervention and Quintana opposed it.

The minister miscalculated his support. He thought that the majority of the senators, composed of ex-*juaristas* and members of the UCN, would join forces against Roca, and that he could also count on several votes in

146 DSCS, 29 September 1894, p. 587. See also pp. 584 and 586.

147 See, for example, *Tribuna*, 29 September and 5 October 1894.

148 Governor Anzorena's abuses in the Province of Mendoza brought about a coalition of forces in the legislature against him. The governor ordered the army to close the legislature and its members requested a federal intervention. Anzorena was a personal friend of both Quintana and President Sáenz Peña, while the minister of interior of Mendoza, the leader of the opposition to the governor, was a personal friend of Roca. While the *roquistas* wanted a federal intervention to replace Anzorena, Quintana opposed it. For the events on Mendoza and the building up of the conflict between Roca and Quintana, see *La Prensa*, 31 October, 4, 6, 7, and 26 November 1894; *La Nación*, 1, 7, and 26 November 1894; *Tribuna*, 7 November 1894. See also Sommariva, *Historia de las intervenciones*, Vol. II, pp. 270–273.

the Chamber of Deputies. His defeat, however, was crushing. The bill for federal intervention was first introduced in the Lower Chamber where, against the minister's expectations, it was approved 46 to 8.<sup>149</sup> Quintana's ministry was over. The remaining cabinet members and the president himself withheld their support and Quintana finally resigned on 17 January 1895. The resulting ministerial crisis was such that President Sáenz Peña himself tendered his resignation five days later.

The first months of 1895 found the Radical Party in a difficult situation. After the defeats in the revolutions of July and September 1893, the party had been facing difficulties resulting from external and internal factors. The repressive measures instituted by Minister Quintana between August 1893 and May 1894 had left little public space to fight the government. The internal tension that the party experienced between "revolution" and "evolution" also produced a deadlock in the party between those wanting to sustain the old banners and those prepared to transform the organization to focus on elections and parliamentary opposition. The fact that Alem remained at the presidency of the party did not resolve the party's dilemma, it only froze it. To abandon revolution and to focus on electoral competition was a viable option for the city and Province of Buenos Aires where the UCR became a successful electoral organization, with a solid party structure and good mobilization skills. The radicals proved that it was possible to compete in elections against the PAN and the UCN and even to defeat them in elections that were hotly contested. However, as a result of internal disputes, the UCR practically abandoned electoral competition after the party split in 1897.

The electoral success the Radical Party enjoyed during 1894 and 1895 also allowed the party to display an opposition role in Congress, something that had mainly been limited before to Alem and Irigoyen, the two leaders who had been in the legislature since the party's foundation. The presence of a larger group of radicals in the Chamber of Deputies raised considerable public attention, particularly during the debate over free trade. Having been traditionally thought to be silent on economic matters, with the debate over free trade the UCR demonstrated that they held and defended a series of economic principles. The debate enabled the radicals to shift the focus of their public discourse from politics to economics, and it showed another significant clash between them and the PAN. It also confirmed that the UCR was a party concerned with the maintenance of the country's traditions, a party against innovation also on economic policies. This confirmation is also reaffirmed by looking at the remaining projects the radicals introduced in Congress during the legislative periods of

<sup>149</sup> *DS*CD, 19 November 1894, p. 612.

1894 and 1895. The UCR was hardly a party of reform. Its goal was to restrict those areas, such as federal intervention or the use of the army, which they thought the government was employing for its own political benefit.

The political combat between Quintana and Roca witnessed in Congress in the last months of 1894 had significant repercussions for the Radical Party. During most of the year, over the campaign of free trade, the radicals had succeeded in focusing public attention on their performance in Congress, distancing themselves from the PAN on other issues in addition to their disagreement over the country's institutions. The Quintana-Roca conflict, however, negatively affected the Radical Party. By the end of 1894, during the Mendoza dispute, the *roquistas* had usurped the radicals' role of opposition in Congress. Irigoyen's interpellation in the Senate had put Minister Quintana on the defensive, but his final downfall was the work of Roca and his circle. The radicals became mere spectators of a conflict which electrified public opinion and had extraordinary political repercussions. However, not only did they not intervene in the Mendoza controversy, but when the time came to choose sides, the radicals quietly voted with the PAN, their hated enemy.<sup>150</sup> When the UCR remained silent during the struggle between Roca and Quintana, it lost a central role in Congress, placing itself on the sidelines of a main dispute for power.

The radicals' situation did not improve during the following legislative period of 1895. The PAN consolidated its power after its triumph over Quintana. In Congress the political parties had been realigned and the PAN enjoyed a more disciplined majority. Furthermore, by 1895 a dispute over Argentina's borders with Chile began to assume serious proportions, becoming the chief public concern. The possibilities of a war with the neighboring country were not remote and this overshadowed or postponed considerations of other matters. The tense atmosphere also had the effect of diluting the content and language of radical opposition. The UCR publicly announced that the international conflict made them decide to curb their role as an opposition party until the danger of war was over.<sup>151</sup> As a result the legislative year 1895 was perceived at the time as the most uninteresting one since 1853.<sup>152</sup>

<sup>150</sup> The radicals' silence during the crisis and their final vote in the chamber aroused much criticism of their performance in Congress. See *The Economist*, 29 December 1894, and *La Prensa*, 9 August 1895, for critics against the radicals' performance. For the most critical arguments against the radicals, see *Tribuna*, 8 May, 14 July, 1 August 1894.

<sup>151</sup> For the international conflict with Chile, see G. Ferrari, "La Argentina y sus vecinos," in Ferrari, *La Argentina del ochenta*, pp. 678-680. For the Radicals' public announcement, see *El Argentino*, 16 September 1895.

<sup>152</sup> "Retrospectivo de 1895."



The downfall of Quintana's Cabinet represented a turning point in the country's national politics. It marked the final victory of Roca in reconstructing his political machine and his confirmation as the unquestionable leader of the PAN. It also confirmed him as the PAN's most likely presidential candidate for 1898. Quintana's and Sáenz Peña's downfall also accelerated the decline of the UCN. Since its formation in 1891 after the Roca-Mitre agreement, the party's role had been one of partnership with the PAN. The UCN had maintained its role as partner, despite some friction with the PAN, hoping for a better chance to enhance its power. This chance had been Manuel Quintana. If the Minister of the Interior had displayed more patience in forming a coalition of *ex-juaristas* and *mistristas* to support his presidential candidate against Roca, the UCN might have become the dominant party. However, with the minister's defeat and Roca's triumph this chance was gone. The PAN recovered its preeminence and, from now on, the UCN's support would be welcomed by the PAN but not needed.

While the PAN was strengthening itself, the UCR remained confused over its future strategy, and as the internal dispute remained unresolved, it corroded the party's foundation, eventually provoking its disintegration. As analyzed in the next chapter, this disintegration gradually took place during 1896 and 1897.

## The Decline of the Radical Party

Although the UCR had initially survived the revolutionary defeats of 1893, and even gained popularity during 1894, the party gradually lost ground. The radicals became divided in their loyalties and in their plans for the party's future. The party had moderated its rhetoric and had lost its old confrontational character without successfully developing a new identity. The radicals' behavior in Congress had disappointed the public, as they became mere observers in the struggle for power between Roca and Quintana. The party also suffered electoral defeats in the capital in 1895 and in both the capital and the Province of Buenos Aires in 1896. The PAN, on the other hand, was finally making a recovery. This was marked by the resignation of Luis Sáenz Peña in January 1895. By 1896, all the provinces, with the exception of San Luis, Corrientes, and Buenos Aires, were under the control of the PAN. Roca had restored his authority over the PAN's national coalition and it was by then certain that the next president for the period 1898–1904 would belong to the *roquista* sector of the party.

While the PAN was recovering, the UCR was, by 1896, a party in decline. The Radical Party had been founded during a crisis in the PAN in 1890, and now that the PAN was regaining its strength the radicals were losing supporters throughout the country and its survival was threatened by internal difficulties. Unable to overcome the divisions that had surfaced after 1893, the UCR failed to display a coherent party image, strong leadership, community of purpose; in short it failed to present a unified front. The party was disbanded in 1898 and disappeared from the scene until Hipólito Yrigoyen began its reconstruction in 1903. The following pages concentrate on the final years of the original UCR. The first section describes the gradual decline of the radicals. This is followed by an analysis of the nature of the competition that took place inside the party between two rival factions, those of Bernardo de Irigoyen and Hipólito Yrigoyen. The final section of this chapter briefly describes the nature of Yrigoyen's Radical Party until he was elected president in 1916.

### The Beginning of the Decline

The decline of the Radical Party differed by region. As we have seen, many radical factions of the interior felt disappointed about the shift the party had undertaken after the revolutionary outbreaks of 1893. Some even formed coalitions with other parties once they realized that the UCR of the federal capital had abandoned the possibility of further uprisings in the country in the near future. Facing the inevitable, the National Committee of the UCR finally decided, in 1895, officially to allow the provincial branches of the party to form coalitions with other opposition parties, such as the UCN, in order to compete against the PAN in the provinces.<sup>1</sup>

By 1896, the UCR had lost most of its members in the provinces. "Here we do not need to fear the radicals, they are a specter from the past world,"<sup>2</sup> was the message sent to Roca from the Province of La Rioja, and the same could be said of the UCR in Córdoba and Corrientes.<sup>3</sup> In Tucumán, Mendoza, and Entre Ríos, the UCR split – in the last two provinces a faction of the radicals joined the PAN.<sup>4</sup> In San Luis and Santa Fe the radicals formed a coalition with the UCN.<sup>5</sup> The UCR remained an independent and relatively strong party of opposition only in the federal capital and the Province of Buenos Aires.

However, even in the federal capital, the party's traditional stronghold, the radicals experienced a series of difficulties that gradually but increasingly undermined their strength. Throughout 1895, the party faced problems of internal discipline – on several occasions presidents of local committees defied the party leaders and refused to contest elections.<sup>6</sup> Naturally, the electoral performance of the party was negatively affected and the UCR lost the elections in the federal capital in 1895.<sup>7</sup> The *porteño*

1 See Alem to Ricardo Núñez, 9 February 1896, reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, p. 421; and J.A. Noble, *Cien años: Dos vidas*, Buenos Aires, no date, p. 472.

2 Antonio Márquez to Roca, 2 February 1895, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 69, N. 1297.

3 In Córdoba, several members of the UCR abandoned the party in 1895 and the remaining party members retired from politics for many years. See *El Diario*, 24 September 1895; *La Prensa*, 1 January 1896. Corrientes, where neither the UCR nor the PAN had any influence, belonged indisputably to the UCN.

4 For the situation of Tucumán, see *El Diario*, 24 September 1895. For Entre Ríos, see *La Prensa*, 1 January 1896; *El Diario*, 8 February 1895. The UCR's branch of Mendoza joined the *roquistas* and were officially expelled from the UCR by the party's National Committee. *El Argentino*, 23 February 1895.

5 *El Argentino*, 28 February 1895; *La Prensa*, 11 October 1895.

6 The formation of party lists for elections became one of the main sources of disagreement inside the party organization. Many presidents of the local committees of the city at times refused to accept the candidates elected by the party convention and refused to organize the elections in their districts. See *La Nación*, 13 and 23 February 1896; *Tribuna*, 14, 22, and 26 February 1896; *El Argentino*, 14 March 1896.

7 See Chapter 5.

radical leaders attempted to revive the party several times during that same year; however, Alem's deteriorating health slowed down any prospect of reconstruction.<sup>8</sup> The UCR of the federal capital was also experiencing financial difficulties. Alem, who had lived an austere life dependent on contributions from the National Committee, was forced to return to his profession as a lawyer.<sup>9</sup> *El Argentino*, which had been enlarged to four pages during 1894, was reduced to two in 1895; the paper closed down in mid-March, 1896, as the party could not longer afford to print it. The closure of *El Argentino* represented a great loss for Alem. He knew that a newspaper was a crucial element for the daily political struggle and he lived with the hope of raising sufficient funds to re-launch it right up until his death.<sup>10</sup>

While the UCR of the federal capital was agonizing, the UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires presented a remarkably different picture. After the revolution of 1893, the province was placed under federal intervention and all branches of government (executive, legislative, and the judiciary) had to be newly organized. The federal interventor, Lucio V. López, was determined to provide the opportunity for an open and clean competition between the political parties, leaving them free to compete "left to their own devices."<sup>11</sup> A new, cleaner, Electoral Register was drawn up and the National Guard was mobilized on election days in order to guarantee order.<sup>12</sup>

Three political parties actively competed in the Province of Buenos Aires: the UCR, under the leadership of Hipólito Yrigoyen; the UCN, under the leadership of Emilio Mitre, son of Bartolomé; and the Unión Provincial (UP), the provincial branch of the PAN, under the leadership of Carlos Pellegrini. All three parties organized party conventions to elect candidates and all three contested the elections.<sup>13</sup> Three consecutive elections took place in the early months of 1894: for national deputies (4 February), for governor and vice-governor (23 February), and for the provincial legislature (25 March). In all three the UCR triumphed.<sup>14</sup> However, a deal in the Electoral College between the UCN and the UP stopped the UCR

8 *La Nación*, 7 June 1895.

9 Alem formed a law firm with his friends Oscar Liliedal and Adolfo Mujica in June 1895. *El Argentino*, 25 June 1895.

10 *La Prensa*, 24 June 1896.

11 "Expediente de Gobierno de la Intervención de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, 1894," *Archivo Lucio V. López*, 21-3-5, N. 6836. López had once belonged to the Unión Cívica but by the time he was appointed federal interventor he had declared himself independent from any political party.

12 For the organization of the new Electoral Register, see *La Nación*, 5 October 1893, and Ezequiel Barrechea to López, 7 October 1893, *Archivo Lucio V. López*, 21-2-9, N. 5994.

13 For the parties' conventions, see *La Prensa*, 11, 14, and 21 January 1894.

14 For the electoral results, see *La Prensa*, 5, 24, and 26 February 1894.



from coming to office, producing a combined UCN–UP executive. The deal was short-lived and by the end of 1895 the UP had joined the UCR in its role as opposition to the governor of the province.<sup>15</sup>

Political developments in the Province of Buenos Aires after the revolution of 1893 and the elections of 1894 pushed the province to the forefront of the national political scene. Buenos Aires became the only province in the country where politics were fervent, exciting, and competitive, occupying a special daily column in each of the main newspapers of the time. In 1894 *El Argentino* began to announce daily provincial news and party meetings, something that had been previously reserved for national events or for party organization in the federal capital.

Hipólito Yrigoyen's public profile grew in proportion to the increasing significance that the Province of Buenos Aires attained in national politics. Whereas the UCR organizations in the remaining provinces were fading and that of the federal capital was struggling to survive, Yrigoyen had turned the UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires into a success story, even though his party organization in the province had also suffered from some defections after the revolution of 1893 and from internal factionalism during 1894.<sup>16</sup> But the UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires did not experience financial difficulties, nor was its internal organization or its electoral performance negatively affected by internal rivalries.<sup>17</sup> Unlike the UCR of the federal capital, Yrigoyen was able to overcome internal resistance, placing the party on a sound footing after the revolutions of 1893. He showed that it was possible to gain through elections what it had been impossible to achieve via armed struggle and that it was feasible to transform a party of revolution into a successful electoral organization.

Yrigoyen's leadership provoked both admiration and contempt within the party. During 1895, relations between the UCR of the federal capital and that of the Province of Buenos Aires were strained.<sup>18</sup> From the city of

<sup>15</sup> *La Prensa*, 1 January 1896.

<sup>16</sup> On the divisions inside the UCR in the province, see L.R. Fors, 1893: *Levantamiento, revolución y desarme de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 1895, pp. 437–440; Pellegrini to Cané, 28 April 1896, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 2 Bis, N. 2201.

<sup>17</sup> For the contrasting financial situation between the UCR of the capital and that of the Province of Buenos Aires, see *El Diario*, 16 August 1894. In 1895 the UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires won again in the elections for national deputies, sending Alem and Demaría to the Chamber. The victory was impressive given that, after claiming that it would not contest the elections, the UCR announced its participation only two days before the election day, and triumphed over the UCN and the UP. It should be pointed out, however, that the radicals of the Province of Buenos Aires lost the following national elections on 8 March 1896 against the UP–UCN coalition. The elections were highly fraudulent and the UCR lost only marginally. For the electoral results see *La Prensa*, 9 March 1896.

<sup>18</sup> This relationship was clearly analyzed by *La Nación*, 20 May 1896.

Buenos Aires, charges were made that a clique controlled the party in the province, completely independent of and indifferent to the UCR of the federal capital and the party's higher authorities. This clique was accused of unilaterally choosing party candidates, exclusively defining the party policies, and of wanting to take over the direction of the National Committee and to replace Alem in the presidency of the UCR.<sup>19</sup> It was also said that in order to achieve these aims the *yrigoyenistas* had put a series of obstacles in Alem's way, denying him assistance when he wanted to organize further armed uprisings,<sup>20</sup> denying him cooperation when Alem wanted to reorganize the UCR during 1895,<sup>21</sup> and even intentionally losing elections when they did not sympathize with the candidates chosen by the party convention.<sup>22</sup> Yrigoyen was the target of these accusations.

The friction between the two branches of the UCR was the result not only of political ambition, but also of the conflict between two different views about the party's future. While the members of the *porteño* UCR wanted rapidly to reorganize the Radical Party according to the intransigent and revolutionary principles under which it had been founded, the members in the province preferred to delay party reorganization, wanting the UCR to adopt a more moderate and flexible policy, and even to establish links with other political parties.<sup>23</sup> This conflict not only delayed the reorganization of the party but also produced a series of resignations by party members on both sides.<sup>24</sup> Some resigned out of frustration because of the delay in the party's reorganization and others left because they strongly opposed the new moderate tendency adopted by the UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires. As a founding member of the UCR in the province expressed it: "It was not worth fighting all these years and sacrificing so many lives and interests for such a development; it would have been enough to negotiate calmly with the party in government."<sup>25</sup>

On 1 July 1896, Leandro Alem killed himself. On that day, he had asked

19 *El Tiempo*, 7 August 1895; *Tribuna*, 26 February 1896.

20 M. Gálvez, *Vida de Hipólito Yrigoyen*, Buenos Aires, 1945, pp. 83–84. Furthermore, Yrigoyen was accused of having informed President Pellegrini about the radicals' revolutionary plans of early 1892, when Pellegrini declared a state of siege and imprisoned many radical leaders. It was also said that Yrigoyen did not want the revolutions of 1893 to be a success because their victory would have strengthened Alem's position within the party. *Obras de Lisandro de la Torre*, Buenos Aires, 1952, Vol. I, pp. 26, 28. For the rivalries between the two leaders, see also Noble, *Cien años*, pp. 463, 467.

21 *Tribuna*, 1 August 1895. 22 *Tribuna*, 26 February 96.

23 *La Nación*, 23 March 1896; *La Prensa*, 19 May 1896; *Tribuna*, 26 February 1896.

24 *La Prensa*, 20 May 1896.

25 Jorge L. Dupuis to L. Alem, 6 February 1894, quoted in Fors, 1893, p. 439.

a group of his closest friends to meet at his house on Cuyo Street around 9 p.m., announcing that an important matter needed to be discussed.<sup>26</sup> The meeting had not yet started when at around 10 p.m., Alem called for a carriage and asked the driver to take him to the Club del Progreso.<sup>27</sup> When the coach arrived at the club, a porter opened the door to find that Alem had shot himself in the head. The driver claimed he had heard nothing during the short journey. The police were called immediately, the body was carried into the club and laid on a table. A note was found inside Alem's pocket with a short explanation for his action. The news spread rapidly throughout the city.

Why did he do it? His biographers have explored a number of possible reasons: his financial situation, bad health, his relations with Hipólito Yrigoyen, a difficult love affair, a bitter public exchange of letters with Carlos Pellegrini about Alem's debts to the Banco de la Provincia, the decline of the UCR, and depression after the death of his friend Aristóbulo del Valle in early 1896.<sup>28</sup> These factors are generally discussed before Alem's death is described, in order to make Alem's suicide appear a logical and unsurprising act. Contemporaries, however, were more puzzled than later biographers about Alem's death. Certainly, his health had deteriorated and his party was divided and in decline. But this was not an adequate explanation for his closest friends nor it did cushion the surprise. After conducting a series of interviews *La Prensa* concluded, "Not a single party member or close, personal friend can begin to explain, or even to speculate about, the motives that led to such an extreme decision."<sup>29</sup>

The timing of Alem's death made it so startling. It happened only a couple of weeks after the UCR had finally launched its reorganization. On 19 May 1896, after forty radicals met at Alem's house, it was officially announced that all the misunderstandings within the party had been

26 The friends were Oscar Liliedal, Francisco Barroetaveña, Adolfo Saldías, Martín Torino, Miguel de la Madrid, and Domingo Demaría. The publications of *La Prensa* and *El Tiempo*, both on 2 July 1896, are followed in this account.

27 The Club del Progreso was one of the most prestigious social clubs in the city and Alem used to attend it regularly.

28 See R. Farías Alem, *Alem y la democracia argentina*, Buenos Aires, no date, p. 189; F. Luna, "Alem la terrible integridad," in G. Ferrari and E. Gallo (comps.), *La Argentina del oculto al centenario*, Buenos Aires, 1980, p. 252; M. Boch, *Historia del Partido Radical: La UCR 1891-1930*, Buenos Aires, 1931, p. 151; C. Avallone, *Leandro N. Alem: Estudio crítico*, Buenos Aires, 1927, p. 148; T. Manacorda, *Alem: Un caudillo, una época*, Buenos Aires, 1941, pp. 488-489, 497-499; A. Yunque, *Leandro N. Alem: El hombre de la multitud*, Buenos Aires, 1953, pp. 362-363; C.A. Cabral, *Alem: Informe sobre la frustración argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1967, pp. 556-557; V. Guerrero, *Alem, historia de un caudillo*, Buenos Aires, 1951, pp. 118-119.

29 *La Prensa*, 2 July 1896. Similar conclusions were expressed by Francisco Barroetaveña in his farewell speech in the cemetery reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, p. 443.

resolved and that the UCR was ready to begin its reorganization.<sup>30</sup> A Party Convention, a project that had been postponed several times in the past, would finally take place in July.<sup>31</sup> It was also announced that Alem had recovered significantly from his health problems, and that a new official Radical newspaper would soon be launched.<sup>32</sup> Alem himself was optimistic about the possibilities of reorganizing the UCR:

There is a rebirth of enthusiasm, the people begin to understand that it is necessary, indispensable, to maintain and rise this party because it is the only light that exists in the country's sombre horizon.<sup>33</sup>

Then Alem committed suicide. In this context the news was totally unexpected.

Alem's intention was to explain his final act in a "political will" (*testamento político*) which he instructed to be published after his death.<sup>34</sup> In it he speaks of "strengths being exhausted," "the impossibility to stop the mountain," "my mission being concluded," of "certain causes and certain factors" that had put obstacles in the path of the reorganization of the party.<sup>35</sup> Alem thought that these words were enough to explain the causes of his death, but he left behind a bewildered audience.<sup>36</sup>

Alem was buried on a rainy 4 July with the honors of a congressman and with the public display appropriate for a respected and popular political figure. A carriage pulled by nine horses transported his body through Callao Avenue to the Recoleta cemetery, preceded by another carriage full of flowers on one side of which was inscribed: NATIONAL GRATITUDE – COURAGE – VIRTUE – PATRIOTISM. The coach was followed by a military parade and by the members of UCR committees carrying flags in mourning, while two military bands played mournful music. A large

30 *El Argentino*, 20 May 1896; *Tribuna*, 20 May 1896.

31 *El Diario*, 19 May 1896. The party convention had been postponed twice during 1895; see *La Prensa*, 17 March 1895 and 22 July 1895. Adolfo Saldías had been working on a project for organizing the Party Convention, which had been approved by Bernardo de Irigoyen and was being discussed with Alem. Bernardo de Irigoyen to Adolfo Saldías, 2 May 1896, *Archivo A. Saldías*, 3-6-4.

32 *La Prensa*, 24 June 1896; *Tribuna* 12 June 1896. Alem had spent most of May in bed, recovering his health in early June. However, without specifying the nature of the illness, some of the letters he left suggest that his sickness was terminal. See his "Testamento político," reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, p. 430, and particularly his letter to R. Castro, 6 June 1896, reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, pp. 422-423. For the announcement of the launching of a new daily, see *La Prensa*, 25 May 1896.

33 Alem to R. Castro, 6 June 1896, *MyD*, p. 423, and Alem to Rodríguez, 4 July 1896, reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, p. 424.

34 Reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, pp. 430-431.

35 Hipólito Yrigoyen was later accused of being those "certain causes and certain factors." See L. de la Torre, *Obras*, Vol. I, p. 28.

36 See his last letter to Barroetaveña reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, p. 429.



crowd surrounded the procession, and some threw flowers on the carriage from the balconies and roofs of the neighboring buildings. The body was buried after long farewell speeches.<sup>37</sup>

All later biographers and some contemporaries understood Alem's death as the suicide of a man who happened to be a politician, the private act of somebody overwhelmed by personal difficulties.<sup>38</sup> However, Alem's death embraced failure, despair, and sacrifice that could, instead, be attributed to political suicide; the act of a public man who intended, with his own death, to make a political statement.<sup>39</sup> His decision to be surrounded by his close political friends before he shot himself and, particularly, the "political will" left to be published after his death, were signs of Alem's intention of making a political statement of his death, the last heroic act for his party. *Tribuna*, for example, saw Alem's death in this light and coldly called Alem's suicide an unnecessary and wasted sacrifice.<sup>40</sup>

Within the UCR itself, some received the news with indifference,<sup>41</sup> others, such as the leader from Córdoba Pedro Molina, with despair:

I confess that I had never received such a political disappointment and that I have never before been so close to understanding the true causes that made Dr. Alem decide to run away from an ungrateful and stubborn people such as ours. And you are telling me that with such citizens we shall continue to exalt the principle of civic virtue that Dr. Alem used to proclaim? Why? To whom?<sup>42</sup>

Alem's closest friends from the city of Buenos Aires believed that their leader had made his last political stand and that he had left them the responsibility of carrying out his last wish of reconstructing the Radical Party.<sup>43</sup> Before his death, Alem had written a farewell letter to each of his most intimate friends and with these letters in hand they began to work toward the revival of the UCR.

### Irigoyen Versus Yrigoyen

Alem did not leave behind an undisputed heir to the presidency of the UCR. The competition to succeed him provoked the split of the party and produced its temporary disbandment until 1905. This turning point in

37 These speeches are reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VIII, pp. 437–462.

38 Such was the attitude of *La Prensa* and *La Nación*, for example, who dedicated respectful editorials to him. *La Prensa*, 2 July 1896; *La Nación*, 2, 4, 5 July 1896.

39 For the difference between a suicide of a politician and a political suicide, see J. Dunkerley, "Political Suicide in Latin America," in his *Political Suicide in Latin America*, London, 1992, pp. 1–48.

40 *Tribuna*, 2 July 1896.

41 In his letter to Saldías, Molina reported that that was the case of most party members in Córdoba; Pedro C. Molina to Adolfo Molina, 24 July 1896, *Archivo Saldías*, 3-6-4.

42 Ibid. 43 His close friends included F. Barroetaveña, M. Torino, O. Liliedal, and A. Saldías.

the party's history has received some attention. Most works have produced a "defense attack" type of story, where the main objective is to blame one of the contesting factions for the party's split.<sup>44</sup> A few works have provided a fairer reconstruction of the events.<sup>45</sup> However, by focusing on 1897, they have failed to place the final split of the UCR within a broader competition for the direction of the party in an *already* divided UCR and within the broader context of national politics. As we shall see below, these are central factors to the understanding of the events that led to the division of the UCR.

With Alem's suicide the party became leaderless. His death failed to reunite the two main factions of the UCR, those of the federal capital and of the Province of Buenos Aires. Indeed, Alem's death made them drift further apart and many foresaw that the inevitable outcome would be a final break between the two sections. "Everybody is awaiting the fight" were the words Carlos Pellegrini used to describe the situation of the Radical Party in August 1896.<sup>46</sup> In the days that followed Alem's death, some of his closest friends – Francisco Barroetaveña, Martín Torino, Martín Irigoyen, and Adolfo Saldías – attempted to revive the party in the city of Buenos Aires. A series of meetings took place during August and September to reorganize the local committees and it was announced that a national party convention to elect the new president of the UCR would soon take place.<sup>47</sup> The task of reorganizing the party, however, proved to be frustrating as there was limited response. "I am afraid that we are plunged into confusion and anarchy," concluded Barroetaveña.<sup>48</sup>

44 Most works were written to defend Hipólito Yrigoyen and to present him as the most loyal follower of Alem's principles. See, for example, F. Luna, "UCR: Historia de su pensamiento. El radicalismo de ayer y de hoy," *Todo es historia*, N. 289, July 1991, p. 12; G. Del Mazo, *El radicalismo: Ensayo sobre su historia y doctrina*, Buenos Aires, 1957, Vol. I, pp. 93, 100; E.P. Zannoni, "La abstención radical," *Hipólito Yrigoyen: Pueblo y Gobierno*, Vol. I, Buenos Aires, 1953, p. 28; G. Dorn, "Idealism versus Reality: The Failure of an Argentine Political Leader, Lisando de la Torre," Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, pp. 90–91. Other historians have accused Yrigoyen of leaving the stage to Roca, who won the presidential elections of 1898 with no significant opposition. See J.A. Ramos, *Revolución y contra-revolución en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1965, Vol. I, p. 399; M. Gálvez, *Vida de Hipólito Yrigoyen*, Buenos Aires, 1945, pp. 103–104.

45 C. Melo, *Las paralelas*, Buenos Aires, 1967; B. Etchepareborda, "Bernardo de Irigoyen y la elección de gobernador de Buenos Aires en 1898: Un caso controvertido de la historia política argentina," *Investigaciones y Ensayos*, N. 5, Buenos Aires, July–December 1968, p. 98; H.J. Cuccorse, "Carlos Pellegrini impone un gobernador mitrista en 1894 y un gobernador radical en 1898: Claves en la historia política de la Provincia de Buenos Aires," *Investigaciones y Ensayos*, N. 24, January–June 1978, pp. 215–270; C. Giacobone and E.R. Gallo, *Radicalismo Bonaerense, 1891–1931: La ingeniería política de Hipólito Yrigoyen*, Buenos Aires, 1999, pp. 109–138.

46 Pellegrini to Cané, 2 August 1896, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 2 bis, N. 2201.

47 *El Tiempo*, 17 August, 16 September, 10 November 1896.

48 F. Barroetaveña to A. Saldías, 28 September 1896, *Archivo Saldías*, 3-6-4.

While the reorganization of the UCR of the capital was proving problematic, the *yrigoyenistas* of the Province of Buenos Aires were ready to make Hipólito Yrigoyen the next president of the Radical Party and to launch his candidacy for the governorship of Buenos Aires in the forthcoming elections of late 1897.<sup>49</sup> The radicals of the city knew that there was little they could do to stop Yrigoyen's attempt to become governor, but they could try to stop him from becoming the next party leader. While Yrigoyen was unchallengeable in his own province, the radicals of the city could count on a majority in the party's National Committee. They knew that the person most likely to frustrate Yrigoyen's ambitions to take control of the party was Bernardo de Irigoyen. However, in spite of their efforts to convince him to challenge Yrigoyen for the presidency of the UCR, Bernardo refused.<sup>50</sup> He was by then seventy-three years old and, he claimed, too old to take over the day-to-day direction of the party.<sup>51</sup> Given Bernardo's refusal, the party convention convened to elect the presidency of the UCR was indefinitely postponed, as was the reorganization of the party.

In the early months of 1897, however, national politics changed as the panorama for the presidential elections of April 1898 became more clear. In January 1897, Carlos Pellegrini had declined a potential presidential candidacy, leaving Roca as the only candidate of the PAN and the most likely winner of the election. Rumors soon began to fly that the PAN would not renew the old electoral agreement with the UCN. This did not mean that Roca had abandoned his old "conciliatory" political style. Indeed, he would have preferred to renew the electoral coalition with the UCN and to offer them the vice-presidency and a place in his next administration.<sup>52</sup> But the votes of the *mitristas* were not needed in the Electoral College and Roca did not have enough political space within the PAN to maneuver another electoral agreement with the UCN.<sup>53</sup>

It had been known for some time that relations between Roca and Pellegrini were tense. Both leaders had been in politics together for ten years, since Pellegrini, a leading *porteño* politician, provided Roca with support in the city and in the Province of Buenos Aires for his presiden-

49 *Tribuna*, 5 October 1896.

50 Given the similarity of Yrigoyen and Irigoyen's surnames in spite of not being related by blood, I have decided to use their first names in the analysis of this particular conjuncture.

51 B. de Irigoyen to A. Saldías, 9 October 1896, *Archivo Saldías*, 3-6-4.

52 Pellegrini to Cané, 10 April 1897, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 2 bis, N. 2201. Roca publicly expressed his willingness to maintain the old agreement with the UCN in his speech in the party convention of 10 July 1897, reprinted in *Tribuna*, 11 July 1897.

53 *La Nación* estimated that by February 1897, the PAN could count on 106 votes in the Electoral College, while Corrientes, the capital, and the Province of Buenos Aires (the only places where a PAN victory could not be guaranteed) would amount to only 74 votes. *La Nación*, 20 February 1897.

tial election of 1880. This support was invaluable for Roca and the PAN. It introduced Roca and his successor Juárez Celman into a social and political circle of *porteño* politicians and enabled the PAN to gain political space in this key district. Pellegrini gained national predominance during the revolution of 1890, when he in person conducted the loyal troops against the rebels, and during his two years as president, between 1890 and 1892. He was the second leader of the PAN (after Roca); he was supported inside the party by old loyal friends (most of them *porteños* and *ex-juaristas* or *mod-ernistas*); and he controlled the PAN's branch in the city and in the Province of Buenos Aires.<sup>54</sup> Pellegrini's friends had tried to convince him to compete against Roca for the next presidential elections, and the press had reported that this group was ready to split from the PAN and would soon launch its own newspaper.<sup>55</sup> However, perhaps thinking that a split and an open competition against Roca was premature, Pellegrini refused to stand for the PAN's presidential candidacy against Roca.

Nevertheless, both PAN leaders held different conceptions about the political future of the country. Roca wanted to continue with his old conciliatory policy and to forge an agreement with the UCN. After all, it had already proved to be a highly successful strategy. It had divided the opposition and had helped him to reconstruct his own national political coalition. A deal with the UCN was not necessary to guarantee Roca's next presidency, but it would diminish any significant opposition in the National Congress during his next administration. In contrast, Pellegrini saw a political future in which the UCN and UCR would have no place in Argentina's national politics. He thought that, eventually, the PAN should be divided into two conservative political parties: one probably led by Pellegrini himself and the other by Roca. This would transform a one-party domination into a two-party hegemony and it would provide the political system with something it badly needed: the alternation of parties in power.<sup>56</sup> The competition of two not too distinct political forces would gradually lead the way into a more democratic political system where the presence of public opinion could be more strongly felt.<sup>57</sup> However, for the immediate future, and to avoid a split in the PAN, Pellegrini demanded that the next vice-president should be a member of his faction. In early April 1897, after a private meeting with Pellegrini, Roca agreed to abandon his plans for a deal with the UCN. The PAN's candidate for the vice-presidency, however, would be elected in a party convention where

54 For political biographies of Pellegrini, see A. Rivero Astengo, *Pellegrini. 1846-1906. Obras*, 5 vols. Buenos Aires, 1941; E. Gallo, *Pellegrini: Orden y reforma*, Buenos Aires, 1997.

55 Pellegrini to Cané, 2 August 1896, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 2 bis, N. 2201. In the same letter Pellegrini claimed that Bernardo de Irigoyen would also support his candidacy.

56 Pellegrini to Cané, 10 April 1897, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 2 bis, N. 2201.

57 For Pellegrini's political thought, see Gallo, *Pellegrini*, pp. 22-34.



the *roquista* and *pellegrinista* factions of the PAN would test their respective strengths.<sup>58</sup>

In the meantime, the UCR remained deadlocked. Bernardo de Irigoyen's refusal to become the party's formal president was obstructing its reorganization. In early 1897 Hipólito Yrigoyen attempted to resolve the situation by offering Bernardo the UCR's candidacy for the governorship of the Province of Buenos Aires in the forthcoming provincial elections of December. Bernardo refused, pleading bad health.<sup>59</sup> To accept would have meant placing himself in the hands of Hipólito, since he had little influence of his own in the province.

However, a few days later, the UCR of the federal capital suddenly announced that a National Party Convention to elect the next party president would take place on 1 April 1897. When the day arrived, in spite of some resistance, Bernardo de Irigoyen was elected president of the Radical Party.<sup>60</sup> The next day, he began negotiations with Mitre for the reunification of the original Unión Cívica.<sup>61</sup> The two parties would run together on a UCR-UCN ticket for the presidential elections and on a UCN-UCR ticket in the elections for the governorship and vice-governorship of the Province of Buenos Aires.<sup>62</sup>

The strengthening of the PAN after Sáenz Peña's downfall denied the UCN a potential agreement with the PAN, and this provided Bernardo de Irigoyen with a crucial ally against Hipólito's faction within the UCR, sufficient perhaps to win the presidential elections. The agreement suited him greatly. Bernardo would run for president with the support in the Electoral College of Corrientes, the federal capital, the Province of Buenos Aires, and probably San Luis. His candidacy was also expected to gain the support of some factions in the provinces which, encouraged by the deal with the UCN, would challenge the PAN. At the same time, the agreement would weaken the UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires, which would be placed behind the *mitristas* on the UCN-UCR ticket in the province. Hipólito's faction would also be delegated to a secondary posi-

58 Pellegrini to Cané, 10 April 1897, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 2 bis, N. 2201.

59 For Bernardo's letter of 3 March 1897 to Hipólito refusing the candidacy for the governorship of Buenos Aires, see *Escritos y discursos del Doctor Bernardo de Irigoyen, gobernador de Buenos Aires* (comp. by E. Fernández Olguín), Buenos Aires, 1910, pp. 16-17.

60 For the convention, see *Tribuna*, 2 April 1897; *El Tiempo*, 2 April 1897. For the internal resistance against the candidacy of Irigoyen inside the UCR, see M. Garro to A. Saldías, 6 March 1897, *Archivo Saldías*, 3-6-5.

61 A description of these events can be found in Melo, *Las paralelas*, Etchepareborda, "Bernardo de Irigoyen"; Cuccorese, "Carlos Pellegrini." These studies are placed here within the broader context of national politics.

62 Pellegrini reported on these negotiations in a letter to Cané on 3 April 1897, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 2 bis, N. 2001. These negotiations were confirmed by *La Prensa*, 3 April 1897.

tion as negotiations with the UCN were being conducted by Bernardo and the National Committee, leaving the UCR of the province outside the transactions.

Hipólito Yrigoyen reacted by pulling the carpet out from under Bernardo's feet. On 5 May, he dissolved the UCR's party organization in the Province of Buenos Aires, arguing that the current provincial government did not guarantee clean elections.<sup>63</sup> The radical representatives in the provincial legislature resigned from their seats, the local committees were disbanded, and it was announced that the UCR would not compete in any future elections in the Province of Buenos Aires.<sup>64</sup> The measures were clear evidence of Hipólito's renowned political skills. The negotiations between Bernardo and the UCN had been conducted on the basis of the UCR's political strength in the Province of Buenos Aires. However, this strength was the result of more than five years' effort by Hipólito Yrigoyen, and he was not ready to hand it over tamely to Bernardo for the latter's benefit. Hipólito knew, as well as everybody else, that if the UCN could not count on the electoral support of the UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires it would pull out of the deal. Bernardo's circle panicked. In May, after a secret session of the National Committee, the UCR of the province was ordered to return its representatives to the legislature, to reestablish the party committees, and to prepare to compete in the elections of December 1897. The order was accompanied by the reminder that, according to the UCR's internal rules, the National Committee was the only party structure entitled to decide on party policies.<sup>65</sup> The UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires decided to obey. Many of Hipólito's followers were unconvinced that dissolving the UCR of the province was the best strategy to follow.<sup>66</sup>

In July, the PAN's party convention elected the ticket Roca-Quirno Costa, confirming that the UCN would be excluded from the next administration.<sup>67</sup> In the same month, the UCN declared that the old deal with the PAN was officially over, the two *mitrista* ministers resigned from the cabinet, and the new agreement between the UCN and the UCR became public. The political campaign that surrounded the announcement of the new deal was deliberately intended to recreate an atmosphere similar to that which brought the original UC together in 1889-1890. The rhetoric of the campaign was as follows: Roca was presented as the evil from which

63 This statement was substantiated by the recent fraudulent elections that had taken place in March. For the electoral results, see *La Prensa*, 29 March 1897.

64 *La Prensa*, 5 May 1897.

65 *La Prensa*, 14 and 15 May 1897.

66 *La Prensa*, 19 May 1897.

67 The election of Roca-Quirno Costa represented Roca's victory over the vice-presidential candidate of Pellegrini, Vicente Casares. For the convention, see *Tribuna*, 11 and 12 July 1897.

the two parties had to rescue the country (as had been the case with Juárez Celman in 1889); the reunification of the UC was the result of the spontaneous initiative of the party's youth sectors (as it had been the first founding of the party in 1889); and a public meeting to formalize the agreement was organized with many of the same people who had participated in the original meeting of September 1889 at Jardín Florida: Bartolomé Mitre, Vicente Fidel López, and Bernardo de Irigoyen.<sup>68</sup>

However, behind this public campaign the UCN-UCR deal was facing difficulties. There was little agreement between the two parties over the nature of the agreement. The UCR wanted a complete fusion of the two parties, a total rebirth of the Unión Cívica.<sup>69</sup> The UCN preferred, instead, to maintain independent party structures and to agree only on candidates.<sup>70</sup> The strategy proposed by the UCN was finally adopted. It was agreed that the two parties would maintain independent organizations and run for elections on a combined ticket and that they would hold independent meetings of their National Committees to ratify the terms of the agreement, after which they would hold separate party conventions to choose candidates. The strategy chosen was known as "parallel politics." The name was provided by Carlos Pellegrini, who sarcastically argued that the two parties of the agreement were like two lines running in parallel, with no contact between them.

The agreement between the UCN and the UCR was officially approved with no difficulty by the National Committees of both parties, which met in July and August. However, it also needed to be ratified by their respective National Conventions,<sup>71</sup> and it soon met with resistance from the lower ranks of both party structures, particularly that of the UCR.<sup>72</sup> The main reaction against the deal came, naturally, from the UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires. Its members resisted the deal because it would have left them in a secondary position in a provincial election that they had a fair chance to win outright; because it would have forced them to form a coalition with their strongest opponents in the province; and because it would have reinforced Bernardo de Irigoyen's leadership of the UCR. The Radical Party of the Province of Buenos Aires refused to ratify the agreement.

68 For these events, see *La Prensa*, 11, 14, 16, 23, and 29 July 1897. See also Melo, *La Paralelas*, p. 9; E. Ramos Mexía, *Mis memorias, 1855-1935*, Buenos Aires, 1936, pp. 172-177; Etchepareborda, "Bernardo de Irigoyen," pp. 89-90.

69 *El Tiempo*, 14 and 16 July 1897.

70 *La Nación*, 16 July 1897.

71 *La Nación*, 17 July 1897; *El Tiempo*, 4 August 1897.

72 In the UCR of the capital it was approved by only 31 votes to 19, provoking the resignation of several party members, including that of the president of the committee of the federal capital, Martín Torino. *La Prensa*, 5 August 1897; *Tribuna*, 5, 9, and 21 August 1897.

The opposition of the provincial UCR became a big obstacle for the UCN-UCR deal. The National Committee of the UCR suggested to the UCN that they settle the presidential ticket first and leave the agreement in the province to be decided by the two provincial committees, in the hope that by then they would have removed Hipólito Yrigoyen from the direction of the provincial branch of the party.<sup>73</sup> The UCN refused. They wanted to settle the agreement in the province before deciding on the ticket for the presidency and vice-presidency.<sup>74</sup> The deadlock in the negotiations was such that, when the days agreed for the national conventions of each party to ratify the agreement arrived, a solution had still not been found. The UCN held their party convention on 30 August but avoided electing a party candidate, waiting to see the results of the convention of the UCR.<sup>75</sup> The UCR began their convention on 1 September, with the opening statement of Oscar Liliedal: "Do not ask those who fight on our side where are they coming from but where are they going."<sup>76</sup> These well-intentioned words were unable to moderate the disputes that took place during the convention over the following days.

The two sections of the UCR openly attacked each other during the convention. Those in favor of the coalition with the UCN did not spare their criticism of what they deemed disruptive actions by the UCR of the province. The most bitter charges came from Lisandro de la Torre, the young leader from the Province of Santa Fe who had gained his reputation as a man of courage during the revolutions of 1893. In a letter of resignation from the party de la Torre publicly accused Hipólito Yrigoyen of having betrayed the revolutionary plans of 1892 and 1893, and of holding "small and shameful feelings."<sup>77</sup> The event ended in a duel between the two men, in which de la Torre's face was permanently scarred. The UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires defended their opposition to the deal, arguing the impossibility of forming an electoral coalition with the party which they had persistently opposed in the province since 1894.<sup>78</sup> However, when the time came to vote, those in favor of the deal had a majority of votes. The UCR of the province reacted to their defeat by abandoning the convention and, soon after, by announcing their formal split from the National Committee of the UCR.<sup>79</sup>

The UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires, although the largest, was not the only sector of the party which rejected the deal with the UCN. In the federal capital a number of local committees, calling themselves *intransigentes*, also abandoned the National Committee. Under the leadership of Martín Torino they rejected the agreement and allied themselves with the

73 *La Prensa*, 30 August 1897.

76 *La Prensa*, 2 September 1897.

78 *Tribuna*, 7 September 1897.

74 *Ibid.* 75 *La Nación*, 30 August 1897.

77 Reprinted in L. de la Torre, *Obras*, Vol I., pp. 14-15.

79 *La Prensa*, 28 October 1897.



UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires. Their support increased rapidly as many thought that, given the resistance it had provoked, the National Committee should withdraw from the deal with the UCN in order to save the unity of the party.<sup>80</sup>

In the interior, the agreement had not been particularly welcome. Guillermo Legizamón, the leader of the UCR of Catamarca, expressed his doubts in a long letter to Adolfo Saldías:

After seven years of fighting and the loss of Alem, del Valle, Gallo, Goyena, Estrada, Navarro Viola, López, Lastra, Leiva, etc., etc., we are back where we started and, for reasons unnecessary to list, in a worse situation than in 1890. The campaign of 1885 with the candidacies of Mr. Irigoyen, Rocha and Gorostiaga to compete against the imposition of Dr. Juárez was also a parallelism whose results are still evident. And then, given that experience, are we going to support another parallelism?<sup>81</sup>

What followed was a bitter contest between the two factions of the Radical Party, now calling themselves *coalicionistas* (pro-agreement), led by the Bernardo de Irigoyen and the party's National Committee, and *anti-coalicionistas* (anti-agreement), led by Hipólito Yrigoyen and the radicals from the Province of Buenos Aires. On 1 October, the UCR of the Province of Buenos Aires announced that it would contest the next elections of the province independently, scheduled for 5 December. The National Committee reacted by officially expelling the UCR of the province from the party, as well as all party members (including a large section from the federal capital) who opposed the coalition with the UCN. Bernardo de Irigoyen set himself to organizing a pro-agreement UCR in the province, while his loyal friend Oscar Lilledal reorganized the UCR in the capital.

However, given the strong reaction of important sectors of the UCR against the agreement, the UCN pulled out in October, barely two months before the elections for governor of Buenos Aires were to take place.<sup>82</sup> On 28 October, Hipólito's sector of the UCR asked Bernardo de Irigoyen, the party's formal president, to call for the reunification of the Radical Party. His refusal further deepened the internal division, and the two branches of the party maintained independent organizations.

The UCR was not the only party experiencing internal difficulties. We have mentioned that Roca and Pellegrini had different long-term plans for national politics; this disagreement manifested itself in the alternative strategies they proposed for the Province of Buenos Aires. The source of these difficulties sprang from the simple fact that none of the parties enjoyed a clear majority in the Province of Buenos Aires, and, therefore,

80 *Tribuna*, 11 October 1897.

81 Guillermo Leguizamón to Adolfo Saldías, Catamarca, 6 August 1897, *Archivo Saldías*, 3-6-5.

82 *La Nación*, 5 October 1897.

the governorship of the province had to be decided by a coalition forged in the province's electoral college between any of the contesting parties. Roca wanted the PAN to form a coalition with the UCN in the province to diminish the opposition he would then face in Congress during his administration.<sup>83</sup> Pellegrini refused. The UCN had become their main opponents in the province, and if they could also control the provinces of Corrientes and Buenos Aires, they could make many demands on the PAN.<sup>84</sup>

Pellegrini thought that offering the governorship to Bernardo de Irigoyen was the PAN's best bet. The division inside the UCR was deep; Bernardo would refuse to call on Hipólito's faction for support, and once in power, he would have to rely on the support of the PAN, given that he had not enough influence of his own in the province.<sup>85</sup> Roca was unconvinced about Pellegrini's strategy and he instructed the *roquista* faction of the PAN in the province, led by Francisco Bosch, to begin negotiations with the UCN for a local electoral deal.<sup>86</sup> Pellegrini reacted by expelling Bosch's faction from the PAN, and the governorship of the Province of Buenos Aires became the center of a power dispute between Roca and Pellegrini.<sup>87</sup>

On 5 December 1897, the Province of Buenos Aires held the most fraudulent elections of the period for the governorship and vice-governorship. Five parties disputed the elections: the UCN, Hipólito Yrigoyen's UCR, Bernardo de Irigoyen's UCR, Pellegrini's PAN, and the *roquista* faction of the PAN.<sup>88</sup> As expected, none of the parties gained a majority, and the electoral results clearly showed that neither Roca's PAN nor Bernardo de Irigoyen's UCR had much support in the province.<sup>89</sup> The outcome of the election intensified negotiations between all the factions as the governor had to be elected by the Electoral College on 1 January 1898.

Roca formed an agreement with the UCN in the province, but the alliance did not provide him with enough votes in the Electoral College.<sup>90</sup> Pellegrini went ahead with his plan and offered Bernardo de Irigoyen the

83 Pellegrini to Miguel Cané, 20 October 1897, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 2 bis, N. 2001.

84 The Province of Corrientes has traditionally been *mitrista*.

85 J. Martínez to Roca, 25 November 1897, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 75.

86 A. Zimmermann to Roca, 6 December 1897, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 75; *La Prensa*, 23 November 1897.

87 *La Prensa*, 8 January 1897.

88 For the electoral results, see *La Prensa*, 14 December 1897.

89 The contesting parties used the following names in the elections: Pellegrini's faction of the PAN was called Unión Nacional (UN); the UCN maintained its name; Irigoyen's UCR was called Radicales Coalicionistas (RC) and Hipólito's Radicales Anticoalicionistas (CR); Roca's faction of the PAN was named Nacionales Independientes (NI).

90 Zimmerman to Roca, 6 December 1897, *Archivo Roca*. Under this deal the UCN promised Bosch seven national deputies. Pellegrini to Cané, 9 December 1897, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 2 bis, N. 2001.

governorship on condition that he reunited the UCR behind him.<sup>91</sup> Initially Hipólito Yrigoyen agreed to support the candidacy of Irigoyen. However, it was Bernardo himself who was not convinced; he wanted Roca's explicit promise of support.<sup>92</sup>

When the date of the meeting of the Electoral College finally arrived, the negotiations were still unresolved and the meeting was postponed until early February. The national government began to threaten the possibility of a federal intervention if the factions did not find a solution in the near future.<sup>93</sup> However, on 10 February, against all expectations, Bernardo de Irigoyen announced that he would become the next governor of the province. Roca was still pressing for a UCN-PAN coalition, so Pellegrini had repeated his offer to Bernardo, now with the sole condition that Pellegrini would pick the vice-governor out of three candidates selected by Irigoyen.<sup>94</sup> Bernardo's acceptance resolved the problem of the governorship, but it deepened the conflict between the two branches of the UCR. Irigoyen was determined to exclude Hipólito's faction from the ticket, and from the future administration altogether, while the *hipolistas* demanded a share of the posts in return for their votes in the Electoral College.<sup>95</sup> Finally, Hipólito accepted Bernardo's candidates for the vice-governorship, but this was only the beginning of a series of disputes between the two factions.

For most members of the PAN, the outcome of the negotiations that had taken place over the governorship of the Province of Buenos Aires was disappointing; "even those who were enthusiastic about the deal," it was argued, "now think that the result is the one which least suits the PAN."<sup>96</sup> Although Pellegrini had initially estimated that the vice-governorship would be filled by the PAN, now the whole ticket was in the hands of Irigoyen. However, the outcome of the negotiations was even less advantageous for the UCR. The conflict inside the party remained unresolved and the two factions of the UCR never reunited. The *hipolistas* counted on a third of the seats in the Senate and a majority in the Chamber of Deputies, from where they consistently obstructed Bernardo's government. In search of support, Bernardo and his followers increasingly turned to Pellegrini. They officially joined the PAN in 1902.<sup>97</sup>

91 Pellegrini to Cané, 9 December 1897, *Archivo Cané*, Leg. 2 bis, N. 2001; G. Torres to Roca, 27 February 1898, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 76.

92 J. Martínez to Roca, 25 November 1897, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 75.

93 *La Prensa*, 18 January 1898.

94 *La Prensa*, 15 February 1898. See also R. Roldán to Roca, 20 February 1898, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 76.

95 M. García Moreou to Roca, 12 February 1898, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 76.

96 J. Martínez to Roca, 28 February 1898, *Archivo Roca*, Leg. 76.

97 See M.G. Bosch, *Historia del Partido Radical. La UCR. 1891-1930*, Buenos Aires, 1931, pp. 140-147.

Thus, the attempt to form an alliance with the UCN provoked the final split in the Radical Party. This split, however, was also the result of older tensions inside the party ranks, tensions that came to the surface after the revolutions of 1893 and, particularly, after Alem's death in 1896. As we have seen, the defeats in the revolutions had produced two opposed tendencies inside the UCR, those of "revolution" and "evolution." Alem represented the former tendency, and until his death, the party was unable to move forward in its policies. In theory the party remained loyal to its old principles, and particularly to the revolutionary ones, but in practice no further revolutions were organized and the UCR concentrated on electoral competition and on its opposition role in Congress, and it abandoned its old vociferous language.

Alem's death resulted in bitter competition for the direction of the party between Hipólito Yrigoyen and his supporters in the Province of Buenos Aires, and Alem's closest friends who controlled the party's National Committee. By then, the struggle had become not so much a question of party strategy; none of the members of Alem's circle justified revolution as a strategy after his death. It was rather a power struggle to obtain control of a political organization. Hipólito Yrigoyen's success in managing the party in the Province of Buenos Aires led his supporters to believe that he should be his uncle's replacement. Alem's friends, however, distrusted him and were not ready to concede him the presidency of the party.

This internal fight became entangled with events in national politics. Roca's renewed supremacy over national politics had left the UCN, its ally during the 1890s, outside office and in opposition. For Irigoyen and his circle this represented a good opportunity to strengthen the party with an alliance with the UCN, to compete against Roca in the next presidential election and to weaken Hipólito's faction both in the Province of Buenos Aires and within the UCR. For Hipólito Yrigoyen, however, there was little potential benefit in an alliance with the UCN. It meant supporting his rival, Bernardo de Irigoyen, for the presidential election, being left out in the negotiations with the UCN, and giving the UCN the governorship of the Province of Buenos Aires, a post that his party had a chance to win by itself. In adopting their respective positions, both factions of the party publicly claimed to be the true heirs of Alem. While Bernardo de Irigoyen and his group claimed that it was most important to stop Roca reaching the presidency, Hipólito claimed that, in rejecting the alliance with the UCN, he was loyal to his uncle's principle of "no deals."

In any event, the impossibility to reconcile the two factions provoked the division of the party. Irigoyen's faction initially attempted to continue with the UCR, offering a symbolic presence in the elections in the city of Buenos Aires for the presidency in 1898. However, most of them gradually joined other political organizations. For a few years, Hipólito's faction



of the Radical Party obstructed the governorship of Bernardo de Irigoyen until the party was temporary dissolved. By the end of 1898 the UCR had ceased to exist. In terms of national politics, the breakdown of the UCR and the frustration of the agreement with the UCN meant that Roca won his second term in office with no significant opponents. The reconstruction of the PAN was, however, short-lived.

### Yrigoyen's Radical Party

There is inevitably an arbitrary element in any historical periodization, though it seems natural to conclude the story of the origins of the UCR in 1898. The Radical Party had been founded by a group of people who shared similar ends and agreed on party strategies. Their principal objective was to destroy the political system developed by the PAN since 1880 and to return the country to its original institutional path. The wide range of means to accomplish these aims included a sound party organization, electoral competition, opposition in the national Congress, the use of virulent language, and revolutions. The discourse employed by the leaders of the party, particularly in their defense of the legitimacy of the use of violence against the government, had given the UCR a well-defined identity. However, by 1898 there were hardly any traces left of these constituent elements of the Radical Party. Alem was dead, and the leading figures of the UCR were divided in their loyalties, objectives, and strategies. The party's rhetoric had lost its recalcitrant nature, the newspaper *El Argentino* had closed down, and the party structure had crumbled.

In the early twentieth century, only one faction of the original UCR maintained the name of the Radical Party, claiming to be the heir of the original UCR. However, this faction, led by Hipólito Yrigoyen and supported by his closest friends in the Province of Buenos Aires, had behaved since its organization as autonomous within the UCR, distant from the circles of Alem, Bernardo de Irigoyen, and the party's National Committee. Most of the original party leaders who had been close to Alem and Irigoyen ended up joining the PAN or other opposition parties.

The political scene rapidly changed in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The most significant transformation was its increasing factionalism. Within the PAN, Roca's victory in reconstructing the national coalition that took him to his second presidency (1898–1904) was short-lived as the internal divisions of the PAN ended in formal splits. The first setback took place in 1903, after Pellegrini defected from the party and set up a political organization to oppose Roca.<sup>98</sup> The antagonism between

98 R. Etchepareborda, "Las presidencias de Uriburu y Roca," in G. Ferrari and E. Gallo (comps.), *La Argentina del ochenta al centenario*, Buenos Aires, 1980, pp. 274–276; Dolores Cullen-Crisol, "Electoral Practices in Argentina, 1898–1904," Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1994, pp. 141–195.

the two leaders had become such that, in order to obstruct Pellegrini's chances to become the country's president for the period 1904–1910, Roca ended up supporting the candidacy of his political enemy of 1894–1895, Manuel Quintana. Circumstances became even more adverse for the PAN after President Quintana died in 1906. Vice-president Figueroa Alcorta embarked on a campaign to dismantle the last *roquista* bastions of the old regime through the use of federal intervention, electoral fraud, and even closing down Congress in 1908.<sup>99</sup> While dismantling what remained of *roquistas*, Figueroa Alcorta also promoted the presidential candidacy of Roque Sáenz Peña for the period 1910–1916. An old enemy of Roca inside the PAN, Sáenz Peña's administration put an end to the regime that had been inaugurated in 1880, by passing the electoral reform of 1912, which made the vote secret and compulsory. The Radical Party won a presidential election in 1916 for the first time.<sup>100</sup>

The PAN was not the only party that suffered from splits and internal rivalries during the first decade of the twentieth century. Figure 6.1 illustrates the fragmented political panorama of those years in the city and Province of Buenos Aires.<sup>101</sup> As the figure illustrates, although the PAN was the strongest political organization in the rest of the country, it was not the only contender for power in the most strategic areas, the city and Province of Buenos Aires. After Roca thwarted his presidential ambitions, Carlos Pellegrini left the party and founded the Partido Autonomista, which he led until his death in 1906. Another less significant split from the PAN was Marcos Avellaneda's faction, which left the PAN after Avellaneda failed to obtain the party's support for the presidential elections of 1904.

Bartolomé Mitre's UCN also suffered divisions after the old *porteño* leader abandoned the direction of the party in 1901. The fight for the leadership of the party provoked the division between the followers of Manuel Quintana and Emilio Mitre, son of Bartolomé. The latter founded the Partido Republicano in 1903; which a few of ex-radicals also joined.<sup>102</sup> The first decades of the twentieth century also witnessed the rapid growth of the Socialist Party in the city of Buenos Aires. Formally founded in 1895, the

99 Figueroa Alcorta closed down the Congress when the forces of Marcelino Ugarte, the governor of the Province of Buenos Aires in alliance with the *roquista* PAN, attempted to obstruct his government by denying it congressional approval of the budget. D.M. Peck, "Argentine Politics and the Province of Mendoza, 1890–1916," Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1977, pp. 107–119; and D.M. Peck, "Las presidencias de Manuel Quintana y José Figueroa Alcorta, 1904–1910," in Ferrari, *La Argentina del ochenta*, p. 321.

100 Peck "Argentine Politics," pp. 120–135.

101 For the political parties and factions of the period 1862–1910, see Appendix 1.

102 See E. Zimmermann, "La prensa y la oposición política en la Argentina a comienzos del siglo: El caso de 'La Nación' y el Partido Republicano," *Estudios Sociales*, 15, Año VIII, 2nd semester, 1998, pp. 45–70.

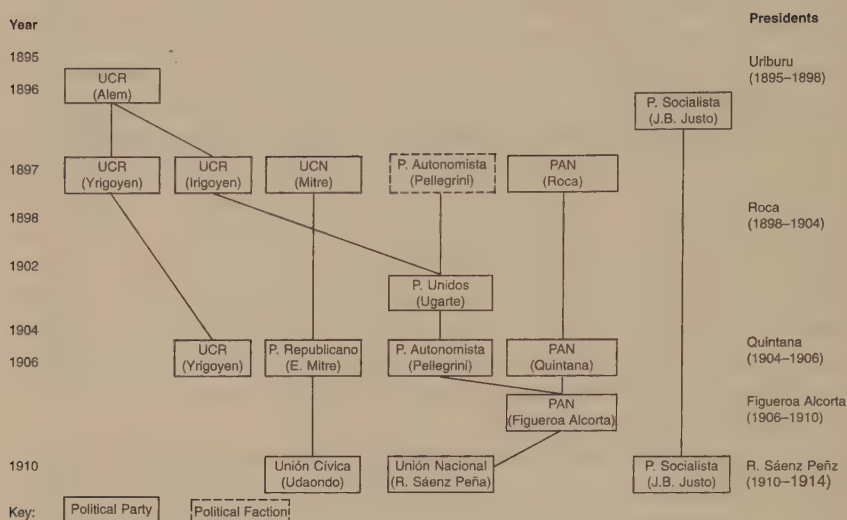


Figure 6.1. A chronology of political parties and factions in the city and Province of Buenos Aires, 1896-1910.

Socialist Party, explicitly organized to defend the interests of the working class, had timidly begun to participate in elections in 1898.<sup>103</sup> The Socialist Party also suffered a split in the second decade of the twentieth century.

The original radical leadership dispersed. The internal division between Bernardo de Irigoyen and Hipólito Yrigoyen never healed and the structure of the party collapsed in 1898. During Irigoyen's governorship of the Province of Buenos Aires (1898-1902), the *hipolistas* became his strongest opponents.<sup>104</sup> Irigoyen's administration survived thanks to the support of the *pellegrinistas* and of the national government, which resorted twice to federal intervention in the province.<sup>105</sup> By 1900, the *bernardistas*, most of whom had been Alem's closest friends, had joined Pellegrini's Partido Autonomista in the Province of Buenos Aires – some, such as Francisco Barroetaveña, were even elected to Congress as representatives of the *autonomistas* in 1902. The fusion of the Partido Autonomista and the *bernardista* faction of the UCR in the Province of Buenos Aires eventually resulted in the formation of the Partidos Unidos, which took Marcelino Ugarte to the governorship (1902-1906) with the ex-radical Adolfo Saldías as vice-governor. In the Province of Santa Fe, ex-radical Lisandro de La Torre

103 Walter, *The Socialist Party*, pp. 28, 46-50, and 56-57.

104 Etchepareborda, "Las presidencias," p. 272.

105 Bosch, *Historia del Partido Radical*, pp. 140-147.

founded a regional political organization known as the League of the South (Liga del Sur) after abandoning the UCR in the stormy party convention of 1897.<sup>106</sup>

The survival of the Radical Party into the twentieth century was mainly the work of Hipólito Yrigoyen and his circle. In early 1903, Yrigoyen began to reorganize the UCR, launching a meeting on 26 July, the anniversary of the revolution of 1890. He received a positive public response: A crowd estimated at 50,000 attended. He also succeeded in attracting important figures, such as Pedro C. Molina, who had joined other political factions. In February 1904, Yrigoyen organized a party convention, the first one since the last radical convention of 1897. However, very few of the old *alemnistas* or *bernardistas* returned to the UCR, and it became mainly composed of Yrigoyen's old group from the Province of Buenos Aires.<sup>107</sup> A year later, in February 1905, Yrigoyen, with the cooperation of a group of young army officers, launched a revolution against President Quintana. The main battles took place in the federal capital and in areas of the provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Mendoza, and Santa Fe. Quintana was aware of the plans for the uprising and easily repressed the revolution in the city and in the Province of Buenos Aires. Although the revolutionaries had temporary successes in Córdoba, Mendoza, and Santa Fe, they were forced to surrender after the defeat in the city and Province of Buenos Aires.<sup>108</sup>

There were some aspects in Yrigoyen's reconstruction of the UCR that need to be emphasized. First, he resorted to the "sacred" symbols of the old UCR to raise support: the figure of Alem, the July Revolution of 1890, party conventions, and revolution. Yrigoyen was highly successful in using these old radical symbols, even though he had had strained relations with his uncle, had hardly participated in the July Revolution, had (it was rumored) refused to cooperate in further armed uprisings after 1893, and had revolted against the party policy adopted in the last Party Convention of 1897.

106 In 1914, the League of the South was one of the main components of the *Partido Demócrata Progresista* (PDP), the last and unsuccessful attempt of members of the disbanded PAN to organize a unified political front for the presidential elections of 1916. For a history of the league and the PDP, see C. Malamud Rikles, *Partidos Políticos y Elecciones en La Argentina: La Liga del Sur (1890-1916)*, Madrid, 1997, and his "El Partido Demócrata Progresista: Un intento fallido de construir un partido nacional liberal conservador," *Desarrollo Económico*, N. 138, Vol. 35, July-September 1995, pp. 289-308.

107 For a brief list of Yrigoyen's followers, see R. Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, Buenos Aires, 1968, p. 245.

108 For the revolution of 1905, see Etchepareborda, *Tres revoluciones*, pp. 241-295. Romero argues that the aim of the revolution of 1905 was mainly as a means of propaganda for the party rather than an attempt to overtake the government. Romero, "El surgimiento," p. 29.



However, Yrigoyen's use of the old radical symbols provided his organization with a sense of continuity with the original Radical Party. While the remaining sectors of the old UCR had been dispersed and absorbed by other political forces, abandoning their original identity, Yrigoyen claimed to be the heir of the original Radical Party, loyal to its original goals and strategies. Yrigoyen continued with the old rhetoric against the PAN on economic corruption and the absence of fair elections, even though the PAN was now in steep decline, the country was experiencing an economic bonanza, and new political parties (such as the Socialist Party and the Partido Republicano) were manifestly experiencing the benefits of electoral competition.

There were at least two features of Yrigoyen's UCR that distinguished it from the original organization. The first was related to the party leader and the new party strategy he implemented. Yrigoyen invested the new UCR with a different style of leadership. The open confrontation, vociferous rhetoric, mass mobilization, and public speeches of the 1890s were replaced by Yrigoyen's "silent" direction of the party. Unlike his uncle, Yrigoyen avoided public speeches and public party meetings, both as opposition leader and later as president of the country. This provided his leadership with the mystique of the unknown, making him a highly popular figure. He exercised a tight and personal control over the party organization, which caused much resentment among party leaders and eventually resulted in a split of the party in 1924. Once he reorganized the UCR in 1905 Yrigoyen chose not to participate in elections, arguing that the system could not provide for fair competition. Until the electoral law of 1912 was passed, Yrigoyen's UCR made electoral abstention the party's main opposition strategy, even though in the 1890s the party had proved electorally successful in the city and Province of Buenos Aires.

A second novel feature of the Yrigoyen's UCR was related to the party's composition and electoral support. We have seen how in the 1890s the leaders of all parties came from similar social backgrounds and that, although there was a tendency for the party to gain its electoral support from the middle and upper sectors, the evidence was not strong enough to argue that class was a significant element in the electoral preferences of the *porteño* voters. From 1916, however, the new leadership of the party came from families who had arrived relatively recently in the country and had played, at best, incipient roles in politics. Yrigoyen's UCR was replacing the traditional political elite with new social elements.<sup>109</sup> Also, the electoral support of Yrigoyen's UCR increasingly came from the middle-

109 Gallo and Sigal, "La formación de los partidos políticos contemporáneos: La Unión Cívica Radical (1890-1916)," *Desarrollo Económico* (April-September), 1963, Vol. 3, N. 1-2, pp. 212-220.

class sectors of the city of Buenos Aires, a more marked tendency than in the 1890s.<sup>110</sup> This could be the longer-term result of the impact of the country's socio-economic changes in politics, an impact that was still yet to be felt in the 1890s.

Some elements of the original UCR lasted into the twentieth century, including the party's name, its symbols, its language of regeneration, and its party structure of committees and conventions. However, the UCR experienced significant changes in its leadership, strategy, and composition, and it also acted in a different political, economic, and social context. More significant, in 1916 the party changed its role from a party of opposition to a party in government. This change of the UCR was somehow foreseen by *Tribuna* in 1894, who, with its usual irony printed:

But that seedbed of hardened revolutionaries, that phalanx of fulminating opponents that you see today so determined to demolish the government, tomorrow will be, as time goes by, the most efficient defenders of government. Just as those who laugh at the old are themselves condemned to comb white hairs (that is if they are lucky enough to reach an old age with some hair). And if you and I do not leave this world before the next national convulsion that will surely take place in the next ten or fifteen years, we are going to see all or most of those who now play the role of demolishers, as the builders of power.<sup>111</sup>

110 Ibid. pp. 198–212. See also R. Walter, "Elections in the City of Buenos Aires during the First Yrigoyen Administration: Social Class and Political Preferences," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 58 (4), pp. 595–624.

111 *Tribuna*, 3 August 1894.



## Conclusion

The origins of the Argentine Radical Party have been studied from a variety of standpoints and various conclusions have been reached. The most fundamental conclusion is that the founding of the UCR merits close examination. This is not only because a detailed analysis of the Radical Party provides a clearer perception of political life of the last two decades of the nineteenth century and helps to revise the standard conceptions about the UCR, but also because the birth of the Radical Party had a decisive impact on the politics of the 1890s and a long-lasting effect on Argentina's political culture and party system.

The objective of the present work has been to provide a comprehensive panorama of the events that led to the formation of the UCR and a different perspective on Argentine politics of the 1890s. It has been argued that the Radical Party was mainly (though not exclusively) a revolutionary party that emerged in the 1890s after a series of complex political events. Clashes of ideology, of factions, and of personalities were the crucible in which it was formed. The UCR leaders saw themselves as both revolutionaries *and* conservatives – terms that acquire their full meaning only in the political context of the time.

The UCR was founded after ten years of political consolidation by the PAN, a party determined to leave behind the “era of political convulsions” and to inaugurate one of “order and progress.” The leaders of the PAN defined their mission as the provision of a strong political and institutional framework in which individuals could peacefully pursue the activities of their choice. The ideology they had launched in the 1880s had defined progress not only as the material development of the country but also as its moral one. Material progress, they claimed, fosters in the individual a work ethic, respect for the law, and love of peace. The PAN publicly argued that to concentrate on progress, defined in a wide sense, was the only means for the country to move forward and to leave behind a past plagued by political convulsions. Three important factors contributed to the successes enjoyed by the PAN in the 1880s. The revolution of 1880, the bloodiest of the late nineteenth century, convinced many Argentines that revolu-



tionary politics should be abandoned for good. The outcome of the revolution, and Roca's success in constructing a federal political structure, significantly diminished political opposition to the PAN during the 1880s. And the economic growth of the 1880s was both a product of and a factor in the greater political stability of that decade.

The PAN was far from the monolithic political party that many historians have described. In this loose federation, rivalries, competition, and confrontation were the order of the day. The Unión Cívica was formed at one of the most critical moments in the PAN's history, when it was torn between the followers of Roca and Juárez Celman, and when the years of economic growth and financial prosperity had given way to the deepest economic crisis that Argentina was to experience in the late nineteenth century. The Unión Cívica was created as a front to prepare a revolution to topple the government of Juárez Celman. Formed by a coalition of political factions, it was not, in the eyes of most of its members, a permanent political party, nor was it expected to survive after Juárez Celman had been removed. The UCR was organized in the flurry of political events that followed Juárez Celman's resignation in August 1890. Juárez Celman left behind him a fragmented and uncertain political scene, and the various political factions embarked on frenzied bargaining for public office. The UCR was formally created in June 1891 when, as the culmination of the bargaining process, a much-debilitated PAN offered an electoral deal to the *mitristas*.

The ideology and revolutionary character of the radicals was their main difference from other Argentine political forces. A different reading of the country's past, present, and future divided the UCR from the PAN, and a different understanding of political methods divided the UCR from other factions critical of the PAN establishment. For the PAN, the economic growth and political stability of the 1880s were evidence of the progress that could be achieved if national energies and resources were not wasted on party strife. PAN members also believed that political parties should have a limited role in society. "It is not possible," they argued, "for the political parties to be in constant activity, filling the public arena, swinging their banners of war. That is not compatible with the institutions and with the public order of society, and such an intense tension in the public spirit could not be tolerated."<sup>1</sup>

These ideas were most vehemently rejected by the radicals. For them, progress was to be achieved not by the absence of party strife, but by its promotion. What the PAN called peace the radicals called the quietness of serfdom;<sup>2</sup> what the PAN called economic progress they called "the corruption of Roca and Juárez's administrations."<sup>3</sup> And while the PAN's sup-

1 *Tribuna*, 14 October 1892.    2 *El Argentino*, 3 June 1891.    3 *Ibid.*, 1 June 1890.

porters took pride in a process destined to transform a fragmented and backward country into a unified nation, the radicals saw the PAN as the despoilers of the Argentine political tradition. For the radicals, this tradition had been created in the 1850s, before the advent of a dominant single party in the 1880s had institutionally downgraded the importance of political competition and debate.

It is in this context that the terms "revolution" and "conservative" acquired their true meanings. The radicals proudly declared themselves conservatives, opposing a government that had violated the traditional system and driven the country into "an unconstitutional and abnormal situation."<sup>4</sup> Their perceived mission was the restoration of the pre-PAN political order. They used the term "revolution" in its traditional republican sense, meaning restoration. They never intended to provoke large-scale social upheaval or to transform the country's institutions, but to return to the fundamental constitutional principles which they perceived the PAN to have violated.

In legitimizing revolution as a practice and attempting revolutionary uprisings on several occasions, the UCR demonstrated how irreconcilable were its differences with the PAN. This discourse also isolated the Radical Party from the other Argentine political forces. Sharing the UCR's critical view of the current situation, other parties and factions rejected revolution as a tool of opposition. The UCN and the *modernistas* concurred with the PAN in rejecting virulent rhetoric and armed struggle as inappropriate to the Argentina of their day.

Ideological clashes were not the only factor in the emergence of the Radical Party. The predominance of the PAN meant that the opposition had no access to public administration, credit, bank directorates and institutional privilege generally. For many outsiders, the breakdown of a decade of PAN dominance in the 1890s represented an opportunity to enter public administration and government. This explains the rapid emergence of branches of first the Unión Cívica, and later of the UCR, in the provinces. Discontentment over the economic crisis of 1890 also contributed to public support for the July Revolution and for the new opposition parties.

It has been argued that the main feature of the Radical Party was its revolutionary character. But it is important to note that the UCR was not exclusively a revolutionary party. It maintained a permanent party organization, regularly contested elections, and sent representatives to the National Congress.

In organizing the party through conventions and committees, the radicals did not claim to be innovators. They simply aimed to supersede the

4 Quoted from Alem's speech in the Senate, 20 June 1891, reprinted in *MyD*, Vol. VII, p. 217.

*personalista* tradition of politics by appealing to the traditions of the political parties in England and the United States. As we have seen, party organization by committees and conventions was also intended to resolve the practical problem of selecting party leaders where there was no "natural" leader. It was adopted at a time of general consensus about the importance of formal party procedures. The UCR was not alone in creating a formal hierarchy, but its members tended to stress the significance of such organization for the revival of civic life. UCR party units in the capital constituted a permanent organization, unlike those of the UCN and the PAN, which appeared before the election and disappeared after election day. For many years the "new" formal procedures in the party organizations coexisted with the "old" ways. Party committees greatly resembled the party clubs that they were supposed to supersede. Conventions for the selection of party candidates tended merely to confirm decisions taken elsewhere. The adoption of a party organization did not mark the end of the *personalista* tradition in either the country or the UCR. This was particularly evident in 1897 when the followers of Hipólito Yrigoyen decided to support their leader rather than comply with the directions of the party's National Committee.

Historians have taken a rather condescending attitude toward nineteenth-century electoral politics in general and toward the performance of the Radical Party in particular. However, we now know that the UCR took regular part in elections and successfully mobilized the Buenos Aires electorate. It was the UCR's success in contesting elections against the UCN and the PAN that forced these two parties into coalition at the local level even when their national alliance had been abandoned. There is some evidence that the UCR's electoral support derived mostly from the middle class and the wealthier districts of the city of Buenos Aires, and failed to gain the support of the lower classes. However, the evidence is not sufficiently strong to enable us to claim that social class was an important factor in determining the political preference of the *porteño* voters.

Although a small minority in the National Congress, the UCR made use of the legislature as a forum in which to criticize the government and to promote legislation in its own areas of interest. The party's performance in Congress would not impress the historian in search of "radical" reform or innovation. But it reveals another ideological clash between the UCR and the government on economic matters, shows the radical's main areas of concern, and confirms its traditional character. The radicals considered the PAN perversely innovative in economic as well as political policy, and accused it of disrupting the country's tradition of free trade when the government adopted protectionist measures. During 1894, the UCR embarked on a public campaign both inside and outside Congress in defense of free trade, which illustrates another significant ideological dis-

inction with the PAN. The performance of the UCR in Congress also reveals that the party aimed to restrict and further regulate areas of government, such as federal intervention and the army, which they accused the PAN of using for its own political benefit.

The Radical Party went into decline after 1894, losing ground in elections, suffering internal divisions, and losing the support of many branches in the provinces. This decline accelerated after Alem's death in 1896. Two aspects should be stressed in the analysis of this decline. First, the party lost ground when its members abandoned revolutionary strategy and virulent rhetoric. Second, though it had established a permanent organization, the party was unable to overcome the *personalista* political tradition. Alem kept his post as UCR president and leader from the birth of the party until his death. His followers were bewildered after his suicide. The existence of formal procedures for selecting the party hierarchy and candidates and for deciding party policy did not avert a split in the post-Alem period.

If the aim of a party organization is to sustain and enlarge its support and to maintain party unity, the UCR of the 1890s can be said to have failed. The party proved unable either to adapt its rhetoric and methods to the post-revolutionary period or to widen its support. Its failure to develop a class program for a mass party has been criticized by historians.<sup>5</sup> But this was a transitional period in which "old" and "new" political practices coexisted. The Santa Fe UCR, for example, developed a strategy to gain the support of immigrant farmers, and in this sense the party was rather modern by Argentine standards.<sup>6</sup> For the most part, Argentine political parties did not have such specific campaign strategies.<sup>7</sup>

One of the Radical Party's main shortcomings, which contributed to the crumbling away of its branches in the interior, was its excessive *porteñismo*. Its members claimed that it was a national party and much effort was invested in creating and sustaining party organizations throughout the country, but it remained mainly a *porteño* party. Not only was Buenos Aires the party's main stronghold, but its governing body, the National Committee, was largely composed of Buenos Aires city residents and the committee always met in the federal capital. *El Argentino* devoted

5 See, for example, D. Rock, *Politics in Argentina 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism*, Cambridge, 1975, p. 46.

6 E. Gallo, *Farmers in Revolt: The Revolutions of 1893 in the Province of Santa Fe, Argentina*, London, 1976, pp. 84-85.

7 Only the Socialist Party had a campaign strategy, although it mainly aimed to "awaken" socialist consciousness among workers through teaching at schools, libraries, cooperatives, and unions, rather than mass mobilization for electoral support. See J. Adelman, "Socialism and Democracy in Argentina in the Age of the Second International," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 72, N. 2, May 1992, pp. 220-221.



its pages mainly to events in the city of Buenos Aires (after 1894 it expanded its coverage to the Province of Buenos Aires), with little regard for the party's provincial activities. There were no provincial correspondents. Party policy, funds, and arms supplies all emanated from the federal capital.

More significant, the *porteño* leaders failed to perceive that certain party policies (such as the refusal to enter deals with other parties or to concentrate on electoral competition) might have been feasible for the city and Province of Buenos Aires but were almost impossible for the provincial branches. This explains why the provincial branches of the UCR gradually disappeared (with the exception of Buenos Aires Province). The crumbling of support accelerated after 1894, when it became clear that the UCR would attempt no further insurrections in the interior. The *porteño* character of the UCR was also evident in the economic doctrines defended by the party. The campaign in favor of free trade initiated by the Radicals press and pursued in Congress took little account of the views of some influential provinces where many of the industries which benefited from the government's protectionist policies were located. This insensitivity cost the radicals the support of, for example, their branch in Tucumán, where protectionism had helped the provincial sugar industry.<sup>8</sup> The UCR's *porteñismo* stemmed from the country's pre-PAN political tradition, when Buenos Aires was the political center of the country. It remained a bone of contention in the party during the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup>

The Argentine Radical Party had aspects in common with political organizations in other countries. A comparative approach would, however, probably stress the differences rather than the similarities. The rhetoric of the UCR, its concern with violations of formal republican rules, and its fear that rapid wealth would corrupt the people's civic virtues are somewhat similar to the rhetoric of the Jacksonians in the United States. But unlike the Jacksonians, the radicals were not a product of rural-urban conflict or of the quarrel between "producing" and "non-producing" classes.<sup>10</sup>

In South America, the obvious parallel is with the Radical Party of Chile. However, similarities such as the organization of party conventions, the revolution of 1891, the original ambiguity toward the working class,

8 For the defection of the Tucumán UCR because of conflict on economic principles, see *Tribuna*, 6 September 1897.

9 A work on the internal conflicts of the UCR in the 1920s is still lacking. See for a brief description K. Remmer, *Party Competition in Argentina and Chile: Political Recruitment and Public Policy, 1890-1930*, Lincoln and London, 1984, p. 101; L.A. Romero, "El surgimiento y la llegada al poder," in L.A. Romero et al., *El Radicalismo*, Buenos Aires, 1967, pp. 30-31.

10 For the Jacksonians, see A.M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson*, Boston, 1947; M. Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion, Politics of Belief*, Stanford, 1960.

and the adoption of the name "Radical" can be misleading when comparing the two parties. In Chile, the Radical Party evolved mainly out of a parliamentary faction; the religious issue that affected the development of political parties in Chile had considerably less significance in Argentina; and, in terms of party manifesto, the Chilean Radicals were more specific about matters such as institutional change, educational reform, and socio-economic policies.<sup>11</sup> But the essential distinction is that the Chilean Radicals, after the revolution of 1891, espoused peace and the rule of law. When the Chilean Radicals launched a manifesto in which they eschewed revolutionary activity, the PAN took the opportunity to compare the Argentine Radicals unfavorably with their Chilean counterparts, and insist that the Argentine UCR should imitate the Chileans in their advocacy for peace.<sup>12</sup>

Of the four main factions that composed the Spanish Republican parties of the 1870s, Ruiz Zorrillas's faction most closely resembled the Argentine UCR in its commitment to revolutionary methods. Castelar's advocacy of strong central government and the rule of law, Salmerón's unitary and "socialist" tendency, and the non-political resistance of Pi y Margall are quite unlike the policies of the UCR.<sup>13</sup> If anything, the UCR's discourse has more resemblance to the Spanish regenerationists political rhetoric, but given that the latter was at its apogee in Spain from 1898, it can hardly be argued that the UCR of the 1890s was influenced by it. Indeed, UCR leaders saw little common ground between politics in Argentina and those of Spain, France, and the remaining South American countries. They did identify with the English revolutionary tradition of the 1660s, which they thought illustrated the legitimate use of violence to produce not innovative change but the restoration of an institutional previous order.<sup>14</sup>

The impact the Radical Party had on Argentine politics of the 1890s should not be underestimated. The disruption of the relative peace and political stability of the previous decade was mainly the radicals' doing. They challenged the ideological and political order of the previous ten years, shaking the very foundations of the PAN's regime. For more than a decade the PAN had constructed a public discourse that praised order and economic progress and demanded demobilization, an end to party strife, avoidance of electoral competition for public office, an end to political convulsions, and the beginning of a new era. In contrast, the radicals mounted

11 See, Remmer, *Party Competition*, pp. 61-87. 12 *Tribuna*, 17 March 1894.

13 For the Republican parties in Spain, see C. Dardé Morales, *Los partidos republicanos en la primera etapa de la Restauración (1875-1890)*, Barcelona, 1974; and also his *Los Republicanos*, Madrid, 1982.

14 See, for example, Alem's speech in the Senate, 20 June 1891, *MyD*, Vol. VII, pp. 216-217.

a campaign based on the need for the public participation of the people to exercise their civic virtues and control the affairs of the government; they demanded respect and loyalty for Argentina's institutional, political, and economic traditions; and they defended the legitimate use of violence against the government. Furthermore, the UCR acted on their words: They refused to make alliances with the PAN and other political organizations to suppress party competition; they launched revolutions, competed in elections, and exercised parliamentary opposition. The radicals shook Argentina out of the political apathy of the 1880s, pushing politics to the forefront of the public debate. They were also important actors in the transitional stage of party development at the turn of the century. Parties had been loose, temporary groupings crystallized around an individual. They gradually became permanent structures that codified their procedure for the selection of candidates and hierarchy, ensured regular communication between party units, and mounted active campaigns for electoral support.

As we have seen, the standard interpretation of Argentina's political development portrays the UCR as the modernizers of the country's institutions and as ultimately responsible for the transition from a restrictive democratic republic to a democratic one that took place with the 1912 electoral reform. A transition of a kind definitely took place after 1912, and although this book has not covered the reform period, more recent works have tended to interpret the electoral reform as the outcome of a policy taken by the leading politicians of a highly fragmented PAN, rather than as resulting of pressures exercised by the UCR.<sup>15</sup> The impact of the UCR of the 1890s is related not so much to the passing of the electoral reform itself or to the political modernization of the country, but to the political culture the radicals helped to shape. During the 1890s, the Radical Party's confrontational political discourse and their raising of public support for insurrections and electoral politics created a high degree of antagonism between government and opposition.<sup>16</sup> The existence and nature of the UCR produced a different political development in the country than the one envisaged by the leading figures of the 1880–1910 period, such as Roca, Juárez Celman, and Pellegrini. Instead of a system of collaboration, conciliation, cooption, and cooperation between the existing political forces, it became one of confrontation and competition

15 Luis A. Romero, "Política democrática y sociedad democrática: Una perspectiva histórica," *Estudios Sociales*, Año VI, N. 10, Santa Fe, 1er semestre, 1996, p. 46; Fernando Devoto, "De nuevo el acontecimiento: Roque Sáenz Peña, la reforma electoral y el movimiento político de 1912," *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. Emilio Ravignani"*, N. 14, 3rd series, 2nd semester, 1996, pp. 93–114.

16 See N. Botana, *El orden conservador: La política argentina entre 1880 y 1916*, Buenos Aires, 1977, p. 173; Remmer, *Party Competition*, p. 87.

between the main political parties, with a high degree of polarization between government and opposition.

In the 1890s, the Radical Party laid the foundation of a long-lasting tradition in Argentina in which cooperation and conciliation between government and opposition or among different political parties became, if not virtually impossible, at least remarkably difficult. The political discourse of the UCR of the 1890s was based on the lack of legitimacy of their opponents. This is not a principle they had themselves invented; it had been present in the politics of the country since independence. But in the 1890s the radicals used it vehemently as it helped them to publicly justify their revolutionary strategy. Denying the legitimacy of the opposition also became a feature of Yrigoyen's first administration and he used it during his presidency to defend his policies of federal intervention in the provinces where he replaced conservative governments by radical ones and ignored the attempts of Congress to control his policies.<sup>17</sup> In a short time, however, denying the legitimacy of the opponent was not confined to the members of the Radical Party, but had spread to most contesting political forces and, as has been pointed out, has been one of the most distinctive features of Argentina's political life.<sup>18</sup>

17 Ana María Mustapic, "Conflictos institucionales durante el primer gobierno radical, 1916-1922," *Desarrollo Económico*, Vol. 24, N. 93 (April-June), 1984.

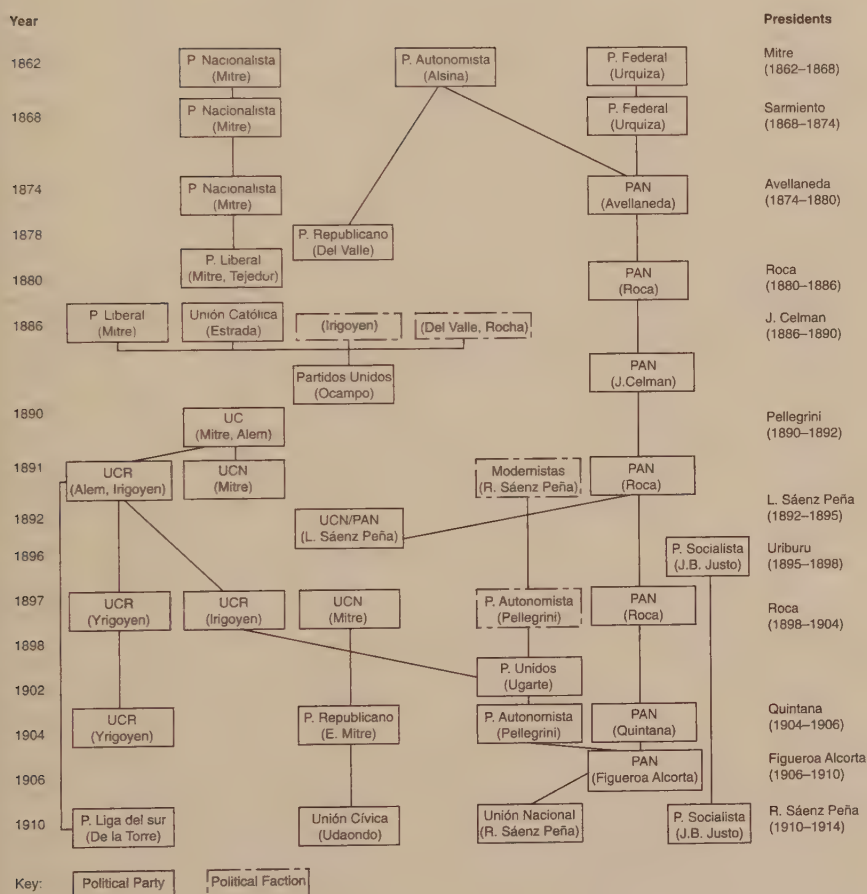
18 T. Halperín Donghi, *La larga agonía de la Argentina peronista*, Buenos Aires, 1994, p. 11.





# Appendix 1

## A Chronology of Political Parties and Factions, 1862-1910





## Appendix 2

Details of the Members of the National Committee of the UCR in 1892<sup>a</sup>

Members of the National Committee of 1892	Date of birth	Age in 1891	Profession	Previous political affiliation	Previous political position
1 Alem, Leandro	1842	49	Lawyer	Autonomista/Republicano	Deputy
2 Arévalo, José	NA	NA	Lawyer	NA	
3 Arraga, Antonio	NA	NA	Doctor	NA	
4 Barroetaña, Francisco	1864	27	Lawyer	None	
5 Crotto, Jose C.	1864	27	Lawyer/Landowner	None	
6 Del Valle, Delfor	1862	29	Landowner	None	
7 Demarchi, Alfredo	1857	34	Engineer/Landowner	None	
8 Demaria, Mariano	1842	49	Lawyer	Autonomista	
9 Ferreyra Cortes, Angel	1851	40	Teacher/Journalist	PAN	Diplomat
10 Irigoyen, Bernardo	1822	69	Lawyer	PAN/Partidos Unidos	Senator/Minister
11 Leguizamón, Guillermo	1856	35	Lawyer	None	
12 Lilledal, Oscar	1852	39	Lawyer/Journalist	None	
13 Lupo, Remigio	1859	32	Journalist	None	
14 Molina, Víctor	1861	30	Lawyer/Landowner	Juarista	Deputy
15 Mujica, Adolfo	1867	24	Chemist	None	
16 Ocampo, Juan B.	1839	52	Journalist	PAN	Deputy
17 Onrubia, Emilio	1849	42	Novelist/Theater owner	Autonomista	
18 Peralta de Alvear, Vicente	1848	43	Landowner	None	



# Appendix 2 (cont.)

Members of the National Committee of 1892	Date of birth	Age in 1891	Profession	Previous political affiliation	Previous political position
19 Pérez, Eduardo	NA	NA	NA	NA	
20 Pérez, Enrique	1863	28	Lawyer	None	
21 Perez, Felipe	NA	NA	Lawyer	NA	
22 Pizarro Lastra, Angel	1854	37	Lawyer	Unión Católica	
23 Rodriguez Larreta, Eduardo	1868	23	Lawyer	None	
24 Saavedra Zavaleta, Carlos	1833	58	Lawyer	Autonomista	Deputy
25 Sala, Jose B.	NA	NA	NA	None	
26 Saldías, Adolfo	1849	42	Lawyer/Historian	Autonomista	
27 Tedín, Miguel	NA	NA	NA	NA	
28 Tedín, D.S.	NA	NA	NA	NA	
29 Ugartiza, Andrés	1838	53	Lawyer/Federal Judge	Autonomista	Provincial Minister

<sup>a</sup> (NA) Not available.

Sources: The biographies of the members have been taken from V.O. Curollo, *Nuevo Diccionario Biográfico Argentino*, 1750-1930, Buenos Aires, 1968, and from D.A. de Santillán, *Gran enciclopedia argentina*, Buenos Aires, 1956. In the cases where only the profession of the member is known, these have been taken from *El Argentino*, 17 March 1893.

# Appendix 3

## Property Values in Buenos Aires, 1890-1898

	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	AVG
1 Catedral N.	21,595	23,235	14,857	16,578	19,979	22,174	14,849	10,557	11,152	17,220
2 Catedral S.	16,370	22,179	27,571	22,090	20,327	22,274	15,144	16,492	14,294	19,638
3 Monserrat	8,584	6,759	5,839	7,169	7,852	7,705	5,273	4,715	4,721	6,513
4 S. Nicolas	11,499	11,668	8,368	8,973	10,423	11,318	6,984	6,219	7,022	9,164
5 Socorro	9,630	7,913	7,786	7,900	6,532	6,179	4,765	14,474	5,784	7,885
6 S. Miguel	18,643	15,329	14,824	12,612	17,395	13,800	13,804	2,255	14,014	13,631
7 Pilar	2,543	1,791	2,209	1,577	1,998	2,510	1,373	5,518	2,326	2,427
8 Piedad	10,451	7,194	6,634	7,168	7,890	10,197	5,090	2,494	6,587	7,078
9 Balvanera	2,443	2,034	1,769	1,819	1,879	2,588	2,277	1,898	2,609	2,146
10 S. Cristobal	1,419	1,541	697	1,094	991	1,192	840	781	2,043	1,178
11 Concepcion	5,172	4,740	3,767	3,763	4,497	3,918	2,721	2,737	837	3,572
12 S. Telmo	5,307	4,984	2,415	5,832	2,932	5,131	3,652	3,556	2,937	4,083
13 S.J. Evangelista	1,628	2,205	1,847	1,742	1,298	1,348	1,307	1,412	3,539	1,814
14 Sta. Lucia	1,788	987	1,096	1,032	1,153	1,419	711	1,137	1,268	1,177
15 Flores	251	212	126	192	166	93	124	39	974	242
16 Belgrano	311	240	261	216	250	402	198	259	269	267
Average	7,352	7,063	6,254	6,235	6,598	7,016	4,945	4,659	5,024	6,127

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